

# Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

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- Organised by the Stop the War Coalition

INTERNATIONAL  
DAY OF ACTION  
AGAINST WAR  
LONDON 15 FEB

Arms  
train  
drivers  
plan  
next  
move

RAIL WORKERS in Motherwell, near Glasgow, have underlined why they refused to move a train carrying ammunition for use against Iraq last week.

Their action should be an inspiration to everyone who opposes war.

At a meeting of their Aslef union branch Motherwell train drivers discussed the stance taken by drivers working for the EWS rail company.

The meeting agreed a statement which began:

"This Motherwell branch is totally opposed to any conflict with Iraq and the USA's seemingly headlong rush into war.

"We also applaud the Aslef leadership's stance in opposing the conflict.

"We are also proud of the EWS members at our branch who have intimated that they have grave reservations if required as part of their duties to drive Ministry of Defence trains at this time."

The statement pointed out that workers at other EWS depots could also be asked to move munitions trains.

"We have no doubt that many of these drivers will have similar sentiments to ourselves."

It concludes by demanding "that no EWS member is harassed, victimised or disciplined for taking this action". And "finally that we, as a trade union and individually, take every opportunity to oppose this conflict".

There are reports that EWS drivers in Scotland will be asked to move munitions again. With tens of thousands of troops now heading for the Gulf there will also be military convoys moving all across Britain in the coming week.

We need to build every protest and every action against this war. And we must make sure the demonstration on Saturday 15 February in London is a huge outpouring of opposition to the war.

More troops are pouring into the Gulf

WHOLE  
WORLD  
SAYS NO  
TO WAR

Join the global movement to stop Bush

DON'T FALL FOR  
THE UN TRAP

page 3

HOW WE CAN  
STOP THE WAR?

centre pages

# Global protests against the war

"WORLD AGAINST the War". That was the front-page headline of the *Independent on Sunday* after protests against Bush's planned war on Iraq swept the world last weekend.

As well as in the US (see page 5), there were protests in many other countries.

## France

UP TO 200,000 people took to the streets in 40 different towns and cities.

The biggest protest was in Paris, where 20,000 marched.

"This was the biggest day of anti-war demonstrations in France since the last Gulf War in 1991," says Nick Barrett in Paris.

"This is the beginning of a mass movement.

"The atmosphere has changed. There is growing public opinion against the war.

"Now we are organising for a national demo in Paris on Saturday 15 February."

## Rest of Europe

●AROUND 20,000 protesters marched to a US base on the outskirts of Madrid.

●Some 5,000 demonstrated in Rostock in eastern Germany, with smaller protests in other parts of Germany.

●There were also 5,000 people on the streets of Florence in Italy. Another 4,000 marched in Rome.

●Some 5,000 protested in Gothenburg, Sweden. "It was a very lively and ethnically mixed march," says Asa from Sweden.

Around 5,000 marched in Brussels in Belgium and 2,000 protested against Shannon airport in Ireland being used by the US air force to refuel planes.

## Canada

TENS OF thousands of people voiced their resistance to war on Iraq.

Some 25,000 protested in Montreal, 20,000 in both Vancouver and Toronto, 15,000 in Halifax and 3,000 in Ottawa, and thousands more in smaller towns.

## Middle East

THERE WAS a protest of 4,000 people in Beirut in Lebanon. The left wing Labour MP George Galloway joined the demonstration outside the UN offices.

In Cairo, Egypt, over 1,000 protesters faced off with riot police as they called for no war against Iraq and for Egypt's government to refuse to allow the US to use the Suez Canal.

Thousands of Palestinians protested in the West Bank towns of Jenin and Tulkarm.

## Pakistan

THERE WERE more demonstrations in Pakistan on 17 and 18 January than for many years.

In the city of Karachi alone there were five protests in the city centre.

These were organised by left wing political parties, trade unionists and non-governmental organisations.

●There were also marches of 2,000 in Ankara in Turkey and a similar number in Christchurch, New Zealand.

All of these countries, and many others, will see powerful protests again on the global day of action against war on 15 February.



# Fees plan will create an elite

**NEW LABOUR'S plans to introduce top-up fees for university courses will exclude more working class people from higher education.**

All universities will be able to charge up to £3,000 for courses. Students will be expected to pay back their fees after they have left university.

Even the poorest students will have to pay the fees.

The government will give students whose parents earn under £10,000 a measly grant of £1,000.

This is less than the grant of £1,710 that students received when Labour scrapped the grant in 1997.

And such students will still have to pay back any fees above £1,100.

Those whose parents earn less than £30,000 between them will get a smaller grant.

Families who earn over £30,000 will get no grant and have to pay the full fees.

So a couple both in jobs on over £15,000 a year will be hit.

That means parents who are a nurse and a postal worker, or a bus driver and a firefighter, for example.

Students' already unbearable debt will be almost doubled.

Education secretary Charles Clarke admitted, "The type of debt we are talking about goes up from about £12,000-£15,000 to about £18,000-£21,000.

"There will be a debt there that is serious. This is a fundamentally market-based system."

Yet these figures don't even include the extra debts, loans from banks and so on that students are forced to take out just to live.

Chancellor Gordon Brown was



**STUDENTS AGAINST fees**

said to be opposed to the introduction of top-up fees because of the potential political backlash.

But he was bought off by the offer of an independent "access regulator" that will only allow universities to charge higher fees if they

accept more students from working class backgrounds.

The rich will be able to pay the fees upfront, leaving their children free from debt, while the poor will be carrying the burden of debt for a very long time.

Many Labour MPs are rightly angry.

"If you end up with a system where poor kids go to the ex-polytechnics and the rich kids go to Cambridge it will be a disaster," says Anne Campbell MP.

"Once the principle is established, universities will be able to do what they like," says Labour MP Ian Gibson.

New Labour is worried about the reaction to its plans. There have already been big student protests against tuition fees and the threat of top-up fees.

We need to step up the protests.

## Brown gives no credit to thousands of families

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown unveiled the rates of the new Child Tax Credit last week.

He called it "the biggest financial boost for mothers since the introduction of child benefit in the 1970s, and a £2 billion transfer of resources from men's pay packets to women's purses".

In fact the amounts on offer are pitifully low, and some of the biggest winners will be people on high incomes.

If a couple have a joint income of £25,000 and three children they will get a tax credit of just £10.40 a week.

But a rise in national insurance comes into effect

at the very same time as the tax credit.

That will take away £5 leaving the couple with a princely £5.40—77p a day.

To claim the cash you have to plough through a 56-page question form—enough to put large numbers of people off.

Means-tested benefits like tax credits are always a failure in their famed "targeting of the poor".

Just before Christmas the government admitted that a third of all families entitled to Working Families' Tax Credit are not claiming it.

That means 604,000 low-income families are missing out on up to £1.4 billion a year—an average

of £42 a week.

The government has also been forced to admit that the childcare tax credit is being received by just 2.3 percent of all families with children up to the age of 16.

## Who is scrounging in countryside?

**SCROUNGERS are buying up huge country mansions and castles around Britain.**

It's not asylum seekers, as the right wing press would like you to believe.

It's two of the richest

men in Britain.

Businessman Stuart Wheeler is the man who gave the Tories £5 million two years ago.

He has spent £5 million on Chilham Castle in Kent for himself, his wife and his 16 year old daughter.

"My advice to anyone buying a castle is to triple your expected budget," says Wheeler.

James Dyson, the boss of Dyson's, has also just bought a stately mansion.

He sacked 800 workers at his Wiltshire vacuum cleaner factory last year to move to Malaysia to exploit cheap labour there.

There is no media scapegoating of these two businessmen.

## PFI schools slated by watchdog

THE FIRST schools built under the government's flagship Private Finance Initiative (PFI) were "significantly worse" than other new schools in England, says a public spending watchdog.

PFI allows private companies to build schools and lease them back to local education authorities for a profit.

The Audit Commission says the PFI schools had smaller classroom sizes and layout, and worse heating, lighting and acoustics.

It says PFI "cannot guarantee better quality buildings and services or lower costs".

The survey looked at 17 of the 25 PFI schools opened by September 2001.

New Labour plans to refurbish more than 500 schools using PFI by 2006.

## Government freezing out teachers

EDUCATION secretary Charles Clarke wants to see teachers' pay frozen for the next three years.

He has told the school teachers' pay review body he wants inflation-only pay rises until 2006.

The body is due to make its recommendations at the end of this month and Clarke will decide whether to implement them.

He wants the freeze in order to pay for the deal the government has struck with some teacher unions on cutting workloads.

As if this "robbing Peter to pay Paul" was not bad enough, the workload deal involves piling more work onto low paid classroom assistants and reducing the access children will have to qualified teachers.

The largest teachers' union, the NUT, has refused to go along with the con.

The National Association of Head Teachers is already warning that there is not even enough money to fund the deal.

## Pay gap is down to the fat cats

THE PAY gap between men and women has widened because Britain's highest paid men have grabbed a bigger slice of the pay packet.

New research from Incomes Data Services shows that the top 5 percent of male earners saw their incomes rise more than the average.

"The highest paid people across a wide range of occupations saw particularly high gains in their earnings last year," says Sally Brett of Incomes Data Services.

"They were more likely to be men than women."

**Next week's Socialist Worker will carry full eyewitness accounts from the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil**



# We can't trust UN to stop war

## FIREFIGHTERS STRIKE FOR ALL OF US



ON THE picket line at Poplar station, east London on Tuesday. For analysis of the strike see page 13

**THE BIGGEST** day of anti-war protests the world has ever seen took place last Saturday.

But instead of listening to the majority around the world who oppose war on Iraq, Tony Blair sent a quarter of the British army to the Gulf.

Support for the war in Britain has fallen to a new low and outright opposition has risen to new heights, according to a poll in the *Guardian* that has tracked opinion since August.

The size of the anti-war movement has shaken the warmongers.

George Bush still says he is prepared to go to war without United Nations backing.

But he and Blair believe they can disarm the anti-war movement by getting the UN on side.

Everyone should be clear. Bush's war is wrong. And it is still wrong even if all five thugs who run the UN's Security Council go along with it.

**Russia's president, Putin, has butchered the people of Chechnya. China's rulers drowned democracy in blood in Tiananmen Square. French president Chirac is a crook busy restoring France's imperial influence in west Africa.**

If five warmongers, not two, launch an attack, how does that make it right?

And the US is busy bribing and bullying any other state on the UN's Security Council that may be doubtful about war.

Two Russian warships have left for the Gulf. The French government is raising a 15,000-strong force.

China is predicted to fall into line in return for greater influence.

And the US (with Blair's craven support) is piling pressure on the UN weapons inspectors to find a pretext to trigger war.

Last weekend the US claimed some 20 year old yellowing documents are proof of an imminent threat of nuclear attack on the West.

Then they wanted us to believe a handful of empty artillery shells (designed to be fired 30 miles) constitute a "serious" threat to world peace.

Chief weapons inspector Hans Blix shows every sign of caving in to US pressure.

A second UN resolution will not change the reality of this war.

**It is a war for oil and US power, a war that will kill thousands of civilians and bring misery to millions.**

Faced with that, many people hope the UN might be one institution that will stand in Bush's way.

But the build-up to war has shown how the warmongers dominate every official body.

It will be down to the mass of people in this country and across the globe to stop this war.

That means building the biggest possible movement against it and a huge turnout for the anti-war demonstration on 15 February.



### GUNNING FOR IRAQ

Opposition to war grows across the world

Mike Davis on  
*Gangs of New York*  
Rob Hoveman on  
Labour and the political fund  
Chris Harman on  
the crisis in Venezuela

### Socialist Worker pamphlet

**All the  
arguments  
against  
Bush and  
Blair's war**



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# Terror laws hit innocent

THE WEEKEND'S newspapers had some of the most uplifting coverage for ages—and some of the most disgusting.

On the one hand, there was extensive coverage of the mushrooming anti-war movement across the globe.

On the other, there was a deluge of bile against asylum seekers, linking them with terrorism and whipping up a frenzy whereby every refugee could be a killer with a vat of ricin in their flat.

A moment's thought would suggest that any "terrorist" organisation is very unlikely to place its operatives in Britain through getting them to seek asylum.

It would simply be far too likely to end with detention and deportation.

But when it comes to refugees the truth has never bothered sections of the media and some politicians. They do not mind if the result is hatred and violence.

**Every arrest of an alleged terrorist gets huge coverage. What gets completely buried is the eventual outcome of subsequent investigations.**

Six Algerians arrested in November were accused of being Al Qaida terrorists plotting mass murder on the tube. They were eventually charged only with passport violations.

A group of six people arrested on terrorism charges in London in December turned out to be five Turkish and one English supporter of a left wing Turkish group.

These examples show how the authorities are rounding people up and in the process eroding civil liberties for all of us.

In December 2001 a series of police raids in London, Luton and Birmingham saw arrests of men labelled "international terrorists" with links to extremist organisations.

All were taken to high security prisons and classified as the highest risk.

There they were refused access to lawyers or telephones. Their families were not informed where they had been taken.

It was not until three months later that the men heard the nature of some of the allegations against them. Even their own lawyers had been forbidden from knowing the contents of the files.

## Arrest

The men included an Algerian, a Moroccan, an Egyptian and a Tunisian. The majority had been rounded up on previous occasions.

Some had cases against them dropped for lack of evidence but were then rearrested on that same evidence.

The prisoners were called "Bin men" by prison warders and their cells were dubbed "Bin Laden's corner".

One detainee was an Algerian who was arrested in 1997 and accused of supporting the Algerian GIA, an Islamic organisation heavily penetrated by Algerian government agents provocateurs. He had been acquitted.

Since then, the Home Office later told an immigration tribunal, "he has been maintaining a lower profile. MI5 assesses that this will in part reflect that he has become even more security conscious since his arrest."

"However, he has maintained contact with a range of Algerian extremists in the

**CHARLIE KIMBER**  
on the scare stories over "terrorist" suspects

UK."

The man has done nothing, which just shows how devious he is! What could be more damning?

The detention of the men was finally ruled illegal by the courts. None of them was charged as a terrorist.

We should remember what happened when a Labour government rushed through the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) in 1974 after IRA bombings.

According to official statistics, 97 percent of those held under the PTA were released without charge.

The 1 percent who were convicted and imprisoned included some of the most notable miscarriages of justice.

## Cause

The first person arrested under the PTA was Paul Hill, a member of the Guildford Four. He was wrongly jailed for 15 years, even though he was completely innocent.

The PTA meant that every year tens of thousands of Irish people were stopped and questioned when travelling between Ireland and Britain. Every Irish person became a suspect. The PTA has now gone, but it has been replaced with even more brutal laws.

The Terrorism Act 2000 broadened the definition of terrorism to include "the threat of serious damage to property", in ways "designed to influence the government" for a "political cause".

That could include organising a protest involving breaching the fence of a war base.

The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 went even further. It meant non-UK citizens could be interned for an indefinite period without trial and that everyone has the duty to inform the police about anyone "suspected" of committing or planning "terrorist" activity.

**The authorities are trying to extend the "war on terror" to become a war on dissent. Civil liberties are being snatched away.**

And if they get away with doing it to refugees and immigrants, they will do the same in the longer term to other "difficult" groups.

The British government interned innocent people during the war in Ireland and during the first Gulf War. They are doing the same again now.

We all feel immensely strengthened by the global anti-war movement. It is a time of inspiration and hope.

At the same time as combating the drive to war we need to fight for justice for all those who are presently under the cosh of the British state and its "anti-terror" laws.

# inside the system

Is Alan a turn coat?

TRADE minister Alan Johnson told a TUC conference that managers are still in the driving seat when it comes to making decisions about their businesses.

He was adamant that new European directives on consultation would not lead to "joint decision making" in the workplace.

How confusing. There used to be a trade union leader called Alan Johnson, who was the spitting image of this minister.

This other Alan Johnson was the leader of the post workers' union when they were on a national strike in 1996 against management's right to push workers around.

★ **HYSTERIA** about terrorism is obviously getting to some people.

The royal family have had terrorism-proof panic rooms installed in Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle.

The panic rooms are bulletproof, bomb-proof and poison gas proof—and cost £1.6 million.

## 11-plus is a minus

WE ARE always being told that selective schools raise standards in education.

A new report shows the opposite is true.

Kent has more selective schools than any other county. A third of Kent's schools are grammar schools.

But the number of failing schools in Kent is three times the national average.

In Kent the number of secondary schools judged to be "poor" is twice that of education authorities with similar levels of deprivation.

Education secretary Charles Clarke is continuing to push ahead with specialist academies, promoting the same kind of divisions everywhere that have been so damaging in Kent.

★ **THE government** is always saying it can't afford to fund higher education.

They tell us there is no other way but to bring in top-up fees to pay for degree courses.

In fact, the department of education has spent £1.7 billion less than its budget.

That is £470 million more than parents and students have had to fork out in tuition fees since they were introduced five years ago.

# Have marchers gone to pot?

THE BOSSES are on strike against the democratically elected president of Venezuela, but their movement is not as popular as the rich in that country would have us believe.

They claim they represent a mass, popular movement against the left wing president, Hugo Chavez.

But in fact the media is using all

kinds of tactics to make the strike and the opposition seem bigger than they are.

One of the trademarks of opposition demonstrations has become making noise by pot-banging.

But the upper class protesters have been caught out recording pot-banging on CDs and playing it on loudspeakers to make it sound like there are more people out demonstrating than there really are.



## Tell the bosses to get off-piste

THE WORLD elite is becoming more scared of the anti-capitalist movement.

The Swiss government has approved draconian new security measures to defend the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Davos this week.

It is going to turn the Swiss skiing resort into a military camp.

It has agreed to send 2,000 soldiers, create a no-fly zone and grant the military the right to shoot down

unauthorised planes.

The government has also granted 100 foreign security guards permission to use firearms.

The residents of Davos aren't happy about the summit either.

"From a business point of view the WEF is bad for us," says Alexandra Bossi, who runs a sporting goods store.

"The demonstrators have a right to give their opinions."

## Cheap thrills

MOSCOW'S NEW super-rich are so bored with their gilded lifestyles they are paying a company to let them experience being poor.

Punters pay £3,500 to play at being homeless, dressed in rags and smeared with rotten turnip.

In another jolly jape, wives or girlfriends dress as prostitutes and bets are laid as to which one gets approached first.

★ **DAME Shirley** Porter and her husband Sir Leslie Porter were lavishly entertained at a glittering diplomatic dinner in the British embassy in Israel last November.

Dame Shirley, the Tory ex-leader of Westminster council, is on the run from Britain over her

role in the "homes for votes" gerrymandering scandal.

She still owes the council £26 million. The British Law Lords described her as politically corrupt.

Despite this she was entertained by diplomats at the expense of taxpayers.

## Why Blair is a red

NEW LABOUR is skint.

The party is over £10 million in the red as donations are falling.

Now it is having trouble paying the £5.5 million mortgage on its posh new offices in Westminster.

So New Labour is asking its supporters to

have a whip-round.

Ever ready to cater for the better off, Labour will award you "silver membership" for a £100 donation or "gold membership" for a £500 one.

Apparently, less than 1,000 people have taken advantage of this offer.

## THINGS THEY SAY

**"I AM not persuaded of the case for war. We have not had much evidence. I don't think Saddam is necessarily the right target."**

■ MAJOR-GENERAL JULIAN THOMPSON, Falklands War commander

**"INSPECTION IS a better way of disarming than bombing. It has not been shown there is any near-term threat from Iraq to Europe or beyond. War may lead to a situation worse than the one we have now."**

■ SIR TIMOTHY GARDEN, former air chief marshal

**"I WOULD not want to lead my troops into battle unless I was totally convinced of its just cause. So far, this does not seem to be the case."**

■ GENERAL SIR MICHAEL ROSE

**"IF WE are talking about war, I think it is disproportionate. I don't think Saddam, though very nasty internally, is danger enough to be worth a war."**

■ SIR MICHAEL QUINLAN, former permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence

**"I'VE real concerns with any war. Since 9/11 there seems to be a link between Iraq and terrorism that politicians have allowed to grow despite there being no evidence. Will any conflict make the region safer? I don't think so."**

■ JOHN NICHOL, former RAF officer captured by Iraq in the last Gulf War

**"WE SHOULDN'T go to war. Since troops returned home in 1991, 558 have died as a result of Gulf War syndrome. For the past ten years British and American planes have been using uranium-coated bombs on the Iraqis. Now we want to send troops there?"**

■ JAMES MOORE, Gulf Veterans' Association

DO YOU have a story for Inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.



# 300,000 MARCH IN WASHINGTON

# ‘People in the US don’t want Bush’s war’

**PROTESTERS poured onto the streets of Washington, DC, on the US East Coast last Saturday in the country’s biggest anti-war protest so far.**

Over 300,000 people joined the march, according to independent observers and the march organisers, Act Now to Stop War and End Racism. Up to 200,000 marched in San Francisco, on the US West Coast, and tens of thousands joined protests in other US cities.

National news networks had been forced to run reports in the days before the demonstration about the protest in Washington.

But they would not admit the true size of the march. Many repeated the police’s estimates—who clearly use the same counting methods as in Britain—that ranged from 10,000 to 50,000 people.

They could not hide the significance of Saturday’s amazing demonstration—the more George Bush has stepped up his war drive, the more people have come out on the streets against it.

“I came with a group of five friends on a six-hour drive from New Paltz, a small town outside New York,” Jo Salas told *Socialist Worker*.

“Our little community sent seven full buses and numerous cars here today. We have been extremely active in our local area for months, with vigils and demonstrations almost weekly. There is tremendous momentum.

“The opinion polls in the US do not give the real picture of what is going on. I have not met anyone who thinks war is a good idea. People I know have said the same thing.

**‘ANTI-WAR protesters converged in Washington making a thunderous presence in the bitter cold. Men, women and children fought off freezing temperatures in ski masks and goggles.**

**The crowd was the largest anti-war demonstration here since the Vietnam era. Marchers spoke of a surging grassroots political power.’**

■ *Front page story, Washington Post, Sunday 19 January*

**HELEN SHOOTER**  
*reports from Washington*

ganiser from Virginia, said, “Our union has passed a resolution against the war and endorsed US Labour Against the War. We are organising to get people out on 15 February.

“It’s very different to the last Gulf War 12 years ago. People are talking about it before the war starts. Even when people aren’t sure what they feel, if you have some discussion they are convinced a war is wrong.

“Bush talks about war being a done deal. People are appalled by that. I think the anti-war protests have forced him to postpone the war this long.”

## Dominates

The media have tried to claim that the protesters are only asking Bush to be “cautious” about a war and not to attack without UN backing.

The mood of Saturday’s demonstration was much harder than that.

“What the Bush administration is doing is hypocritical,” said Becky LoDolce, a restaurant worker from Syracuse, New York.

“When you look at what the US has done over the years, who is really the danger in the world? I don’t want war even if the United Nations backs it.

“Who really dominates the UN? It is pushed over by the US.”

Miles, a speaker from the Not In Our Name coalition, was cheered when he said, “George Bush is positioning troops and weapons.

“His war moves need to be met with powerful resistance, whether they have the blessing of the UN or not.

“Whether there is a quick victory or not, this war is wrong.

Picture: dc.indymedia.org

## ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATORS crowded into Washington in the US last Saturday

“People round the world look at the US and see a powerful, war-hungry juggernaut. They also have to see powerful resistance and a people saying, ‘Not in our name’.”

## Slaughter

Many of the marchers were angry about other issues they saw as connected to Bush’s war drive. These included the attack on civil liberties, the repression against immigrants, and the increase in military spending at the expense of welfare.

Charlie Shobe from Maryland was one of the many war veterans who joined the march. He said:

“I have been anti-war since I came out of Vietnam. That was a stupid slaughter for nothing too.

“There are a lot of veterans here, and I even talked to one guy who is on active duty in the Marines.”

Ron Kovic, the Vietnam War veteran portrayed in the film *Born on the Fourth of July*, spoke at the rally. He said:

“Today is particularly significant for me as 35 years ago, virtually to the day, I was shot in Vietnam and paralysed.

“You will be part of an extraordinary moment in history. This movement cannot only stop a war in Iraq—it can change the priorities of the nation.”

Picture: PA PHOTOS/EPA

**Students  
organise  
for 15  
February**

AROUND 120 student delegates from 60 colleges met in George Washington University the day before the demo to launch a student coalition against the war.

“Students are holding joint organising conferences in Washington and San Francisco to create a national student-run anti-war network,” said Lauren Ciszak, one of the coordinators.

The students voted to set up the Campus Anti-War Network. They agreed to organise a big mobilisation for 15 February in New York. They also voted to build for a national walkout on campus the day after war starts.

The students loudly applauded two members of the Stop the War Coalition in Britain, Jeremy Corbyn MP and Helen Salmon from the NUS executive.

# Celebrities back movement

**THE ACTRESS Jessica Lange spoke at the march’s opening rally:**

“We are sending a message. We object to this immoral war. Bush, you are not speaking for us.

“We must not be silent. We must provoke debate in our homes, schools and communities.

“This administration has tended to keep us paralysed with war rhetoric and the Patriot Act. It is a cover to turn back the clock on civil liberties.”

Actor Martin Sheen spoke at the anti-war rally on last Saturday’s

demonstration in San Francisco.

Both are among the 100 celebrities who have signed up to Artists United to Win Without War, a declaration against war on Iraq.

Others who have signed it include Martin Scorsese, Elliott Gould, Gillian Anderson, Matt Damon, Danny Glover, Samuel L Jackson, David Duchovny and Helen Hunt.

Viggo Mortensen, who plays Aragorn in the *Lord of the Rings* films, wore a T-shirt with “No blood for oil” written on it while on TV promoting his latest film.



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## Speak out now, not after killing

AS WAR looms ever nearer it is time for our elected representatives to get off the fence and make clear where they stand.

MPs and local councillors have a responsibility to speak out. There is an old saying that "silence implies consent". That is true of the threat of war with Iraq.

There is no room for keeping quiet. Any MP or councillor who refuses to speak out against the war will share the responsibility for the bloodshed which George Bush and his poodle Tony Blair plan to unleash.

Here in Tower Hamlets we will be stepping up the pressure on our MPs and councillors in the coming weeks.

The vast majority of people locally oppose the war.

Yet our two MPs, Oona King and Jim Fitzpatrick, are, so far, backing Blair.

We will be seeking to mobilise people to press them to change that stance and to march with their constituents on 15 February.

**Local councillors on the Labour-run council, many of whom are Muslims, have so far said nothing.**

We will be phoning, writing and lobbying them to demand they speak out against war and join the 15 February march too. People across the country should do the same.

No doubt many MPs and councillors are against the war in private. Now is the time to speak out publicly.

□ **KAMBIZ BOOMLA,**  
East London

## Congestion charge: I support this idea

I LOOK forward to the introduction of a congestion charge in London next month.

I am sure it will be very imperfect and that there will be lots of problems. But I thoroughly support the principle.

We simply cannot go on with cars choking up the roads and ruining the quality of life for everybody in the city. People say it will be inconvenient to have restrictions on car use.

I say that it's bloody inconvenient to have pollution and levels of traffic that are

a constant threat to pedestrians, especially children.

The main people against the charge are the selfish individuals who feel that, like Mr Toad, they should be able to drive their car wherever they want, whenever they want, and damn the rest of us.

I would exempt some essential workers from the tax (although most don't drive into London as you can't park) and assess details after six months.

But the idea is spot on.  
□ **ANNE COVINGTON,**  
West London

## Congestion charge: attack on workers

I AM against the congestion tax that is shortly to come into operation in London.

It think it will hit the poor hardest and do very little to improve public transport.

I am a postal worker. Some of my colleagues share a car to come to work.

They will be hit hard by the charge—another £25 a

week on their travel costs as we work six days a week.

I am suspicious about measures which are said to be about the environment but always end up hitting the people who can't afford it.

The solution in London is cheap buses and tubes that encourage people to abandon their cars, not more money out of our pockets.

It is encouraging that there are the beginnings of a movement to stop the tax. Some trade unions have launched legal moves and there are now protest meetings organised.

I think we should get involved in these and push them in a leftward direction rather than leave them to be directed by Tories and *Daily Mail* readers.

If the unions insisted employers paid the tax for their workers then they could start strikes if they refused.

If we defeat the congestion tax then it will give people confidence to stand up to other measures imposed on us by authority.

□ **POSTAL WORKER,**  
London

or send to



Picture: SOCIALIST WORKER



Picture: MARK KRANTZ

PROTESTS EARLIER this month in London (left) and Manchester

# Starvation is Labour policy

**AS A result of recent changes in government policy, asylum seekers are being evicted from their homes, having all benefits removed and being denied the right to work.**

Most are Iraqi Kurds. We challenged my local MP and immigration minister Beverley Hughes to say what the government expects Kurdish refugees to do in such circumstances.

She first suggested they contact the "networks that got them here". Later she promised a "safe overland route through Turkey".

Now the real reason behind the government's cruel policy has been

revealed in a radio interview last week.

The *Today* programme featured a refugee who had applied for asylum on 10 January, two days after the harsh new regime came into effect.

**He was denied all support and cannot even appeal against this judgement. So he is living in a railway station.**

Hughes admitted this was harsh but said the aim of the policy was to act as a "deterrent" and was intended to "send a message to the world".

In contrast to this cruel message, local schools across Manchester have welcomed the children of

asylum seekers—and everyone has thrived, according to inspectors.

Networks of support for asylum seekers have grown.

Now in response to the new laws a Crisis Committee to Stop the Destitution of Asylum Seekers has been set up.

Anger is high at government hypocrisy—cutting food aid to those fleeing from Zimbabwe, and supporting a war on Iraq that will force even more to flee.

Campaigners and activists are determined to both fight this policy and to bring support to those in need.

□ **MARK KRANTZ, Manchester**

## From rank and file to Westminster MP

**LABOUR MP and ex Fire Brigades Union member Jim Fitzpatrick (Letters, 11 January) would have read *Socialist Worker* more often in the 1970s when he was a member of the Socialist Workers Party.**

He played a leading part as editor in producing the *Rank and File Fireman* pamphlet during the 1977-8 national strike.

In reply to Sian Griffiths he says that he does not support a 40 percent pay rise for the fire service, but he does support a fairer deal and believes that the service can be improved (ie modernised).

In one of the media interviews he refers to, he stated that there was an alternative to strike action in the dispute, and that was the Bain inquiry.

An editorial article in *Rank and File Fireman* in the 1977-8 strike stated, "The employers' idea of cost effectiveness within the fire service is exactly the same as their crude

and brutal cuts in the NHS, and we should make no mistake that is their intention for the fire service if we allow them to.

"Only we in the fire service know just what tragic results could occur if we allow them to decimate the fire service as they have done the NHS."

Nothing much has changed, Jimi, except that you are now a Labour MP.

Jim Fitzpatrick originally comes from an area of Glasgow with high levels of poverty and deprivation.

He knows as well as any firefighter, and better than any politician, the potentially disastrous consequences which the cuts contained in the Bain report would have for the people in these areas, who already suffer the highest number of deaths from fire due to their circumstances.

Enjoy your career, Jimi.

□ **RONNIE ROBERTSON,**  
retired firefighter,  
Glasgow

## Lies last time, lies this time

I WAS enraged to read Christopher Hitchens writing in the *Daily Mirror* in support of war on Iraq.

He predicts that Saddam Hussein has huge weapons stores underneath mosques, and that we will soon discover "mass graves" on a scale that will "astonish the world".

Let me say at once that I do believe the Iraqi regime is brutal, and does indeed torture and murder opponents.

But Hitchens' lurid article is simply an attempt to cover up the truth about Bush and Blair's war, and to paint it in humanitarian colours.

Hitchens made similar predictions and played the same role during the Kosovo war.

After the NATO bombing of Kosovo and Serbia, Hitchens claimed that evidence would soon be produced of widespread slaughter by Serbian forces amounting

to genocide.

In particular he pointed to the "mass burnings of bodies in the blast furnace of the Trepcia steel plant".

A thorough investigation by Western experts took place of what had happened at Trepcia and found absolutely no evidence of "mass burning of bodies".

### Crimes

Hitchens did not apologise, nor did he seem worried by the 250,000 Serbs and Gypsies forced from their homes by the ethnic cleansing after NATO's assault.

Christopher Hitchens wrote a very useful book setting out the imperialist crimes of Henry Kissinger. What a disgrace that he now acts as one of the foremost cheerleaders for imperialist war.

□ **JANE NORTH,**  
East London

■ **THE TUC** has just launched a campaign to enable trade unionists to take part in strike ballots through e-mail or by phone.

This seems a reasonable enough idea.

May I suggest, however, that a more immediate reform the TUC could easily achieve would be for trade unionists to be allowed to vote on who is the TUC general secretary?

Brendan Barber, John Monks' successor, emerged through a process which involved only a tiny circle.

Why not have an election which could spark interesting debate among seven million union members about the direction of the movement?

□ **HELEN CHAYTOR,**  
Birmingham

■ **SOCIALIST Worker** (11 January) is in danger of underplaying the threat of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

This is the most important issue facing all of us for the next year.

If GATS goes through then it will simply not be possible to raise objections to privatisation without battling the entire force of the law—which trade unions are not going to do.

GATS will achieve for the US what the war on Iraq is intended to win—global hegemony.

But it will do it "peacefully" and securely.

□ **MALCOLM HARRISON,** by e-mail

■ **THANKS FOR** the good news about the Motherwell train drivers blocking war materials.

It seems to me it was quite clever of the union to refrain from publicly backing their stance, as this would have opened them up to legal action.

In these difficult times for unions I suggest we could do with more of such tactics.

□ **ANDY DINWOODIE,**  
Berwick

■ **YOUR ARTICLE** (18 January) on the *Empire* television series is fine as far as it goes, but misses out the series' argument about the US today.

Niall Ferguson says that the US must take up the mission of the British Empire and proudly act as a "force for good".

The British Empire was certainly evil.

A Bush empire, given the development of military technology, would be much worse.

□ **TERRY HARRISON,**  
by e-mail

■ **"TERRORISM, n,** the use or threat of violence to intimidate or cause panic, esp as a means of affecting political conduct." (*Black's Law Dictionary*)

This is what the US and we are doing to the people of Iraq.

I am expressing my opposition to my government's action by working with volunteers who will shortly travel to Iraq to act as "human shields", ultimately placing themselves round hospitals, schools and water-works in Iraq.

□ **RICHARD SCRAE,**  
TJP Iraq Human Shield  
Action (phone 020 7572 1124 or 07787 794 250, or go to [www.uk.society.org](http://www.uk.society.org) or e-mail [riscrae@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:riscrae@yahoo.co.uk))

**Socialist Worker**

Editorial: 020 7538 0828  
Circulation and business: 020 7538 3305  
National office: 020 7538 5821  
Industrial Department: 020 7987 1919  
All correspondence to PO Box 82, London E3 3LH  
Published weekly except final week of December.  
Published and printed by Larkham Printers and Publishers Ltd (TU all departments)  
Registered as a newspaper with the Royal Mail

*Socialist Worker* is on the internet at [www.socialistworker.co.uk](http://www.socialistworker.co.uk)



# LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT PLANNED AS

# Housing crisis drives children to suicide

ANYONE WHO listened to Radio 4's *Today* news programme on Monday morning would have been shocked by the story of a south London family facing eviction.

The mother spoke of how one of her children, now eight years old, had repeatedly tried to commit suicide, once tying a flex round his neck, on another occasion throwing himself in front of a car.

The family was made homeless seven years ago. Since then they have been driven from one temporary bed and breakfast hostel to another.

Now they face eviction after the hostel they are living in, in Southwark, south London, complained of the eight year old's disruptive behaviour.

A child psychiatrist spoke of how such behaviour, as well as the suicide attempts, was rooted in the constant moving from one miserable place to another.

A housing lawyer told the BBC that such cases are increasingly common.

Such cases are the grim reality behind a housing scandal that blights Britain.

New Labour promised to end homelessness when it came to office in 1997.

Ministers pledged to tackle the misery of families condemned to bed and breakfast hostels.

**FACT 1** AROUND £1,000 of the yearly rent paid by every council tenant does not go into maintaining and improving housing. The government pockets £2.8 billion of rent money a year and uses it for other purposes.

Instead things have got worse.

There are now officially 84,800 households living in temporary and emergency accommodation in Britain. Many are in bed and breakfast accommodation.

That figure has increased by 86 percent since 1997 to an all-time record level.

Government figures show that there are now 750,000 families with children who are living in poor housing.

These children are more likely to suffer from illnesses such as asthma, allergies, depression and even tuberculosis.

The immediate answer to the housing crisis is to use the vast number of empty homes in Britain.

According to the official Empty Homes Agency, there are a staggering 753,188



LOBBYING PARLIAMENT—tenants have protested before and will do so again

empty homes in Britain.

Over 80 percent are kept empty by private landlords, banks and building societies. This helps keep house prices and rents sky high.

In London alone there are over 100,000 empty homes while 48,000 households are living in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation.

The government could use its powers to requisition homes which are deliberately kept empty.

In the longer term tackling the housing crisis means building the decent, affordable homes people need.

**Instead housebuilding in Britain is now at its lowest level since the 1920s, and is barely at the level needed just to replace existing houses.**

One effect of this is that house prices in many parts of Britain are simply beyond the reach of ordinary people. In London, for example,

the average house price is now £232,830!

Housing experts are now warning of a repeat of the kind of housing crash we had in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the return of "negative equity" and a surge in repossessions and the misery they bring.

The growing housing crisis makes a planned lobby of parliament next week over council housing especially vital.

## Beware this halfway house towards estate privatisation

NEXT WEEK'S lobby of parliament takes place as the government prepares to take some crunch decisions over the future of council housing.

Tony Blair is committed to bringing all council housing up to an official "decency standard" by 2010.

His government's original plan to meet that commitment was straight out of Margaret Thatcher's book.

It planned to hand 200,000 council houses a year to housing associations and other private housing companies.

**Tenants would pay through higher rents and loss of security for any work on their homes.**

But many tenants have rejected this blackmail and campaigned against "stock transfers".

Last year one of the biggest privatisations was defeated when tenants in Birmingham voted against it after a united campaign by tenants and trade unionists. There have

**FACT 2** TONY BLAIR is ready to send British troops to war against Iraq. He will call them "our boys" and "heroes".

A survey by the Crisis housing charity found that one in four people sleeping rough in Britain have been in the armed forces.

been many more examples too.

That resistance means the government has been forced to announce a "review" whose results are due soon.

The government knows that its privatisation target is simply not going to be met because of tenant opposition. But it doesn't dare abandon its "decent homes" target.

That target is a key pledge for many Labour councillors and the government fears that ditching it

would cause turmoil in Labour's ranks, not to mention anger among tenants.

So the government has been forced to look at putting extra public money in to meet the pledge.

It doesn't want to give that directly to councils so it has come up with a plan to channel money through so called Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs).

These are wholly owned by the local councils, but set up as a separate companies. In reality they are a halfway house to privatisation.

They are designed to dampen down opposition to the government, and allow it to return to full privatisation in the future.

Everyone should oppose plans for such ALMOs.

If the government is giving public money to such companies, why not just give it to councils directly so they can build the homes needed?

## Quality council funding needed

by ALAN WALTER,  
*Defend Council Housing*

COUNCIL tenants and trade unionists, bringing local councillors with them, will be lobbying MPs at parliament next Wednesday, 29 January.

Our demand is direct public investment in council housing with no strings attached.

This issue is important for everyone, whether they are a council, housing association or private tenant, or a mortgage payer.

**Look at the scandal of homelessness, of record numbers living in temporary accommodation, of inadequate housing, of the insanity of house prices.**

If you put all this together the idea that the market can provide decent housing is laughable.

We need decent, secure, affordable and democratically accountable housing.

This government constantly talks of "best value". Well the "best value" answer to the housing crisis is

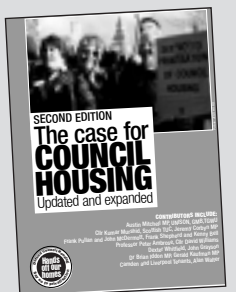
public investment in council housing.

After the Second World War governments understood that. Council housing was seen as an essential public service.

People were happy and proud to leave the private sector and to become council tenants.

Council housing should not be last resort housing for people who can't get anything else.

It should be quality housing available for all, and for future generations too.



New edition of *The Case for Council Housing* pamphlet available now, £5. Discounts for bulk buys. Contact Defend Council Housing, phone 020 7987 9989 or go to [www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk](http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk)

Stop privatisation  
**Invest in council housing**  
with no strings attached

**Lobby parliament Wednesday 29 January**

Rally 1-3pm, Central Hall, Westminster, London  
More information from Defend Council Housing Phone 020 7987 9989 or go to [www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk](http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk)

**SPONSORS OF next week's parliamentary lobby** include tenants federations in Camden, Doncaster, Holton, Hull, Liverpool, Newcastle, Reading, Southwark, Stevenage, Stockport, Wakefield, Waveney and Wirral.

The Union, GMB, Ucat, TGWU and RMT unions are all backing it, as are the official groups of Labour councillors on Southwark and Liverpool councils.

MPs on the platform at the Westminster Central Hall rally will include Gerald Kaufman, Andrew Bennett, Austin Mitchell, Brian Iddon and Lynne Jones.

Brendan Barber, the new TUC general secretary, will also be speaking.



People flee from horror

Media have ignored  
Algeria's suffering

THE MEDIA have whipped up hysteria against refugees from Algeria after last week's killing of a police officer in Manchester.

They paint a picture that those coming here from the North African country are all potential killers, linked to a dangerous network of Islamist terrorists.

This is racist nonsense. And the real reasons people are fleeing Algeria are rarely even discussed.

Until 1962 Algeria was a French colony.

In the 1950s a movement for independence met savage repression. Torture and summary execution by French forces were routine, and half a million Algerians were killed before independence was finally won.

The first leader of newly independent Algeria was Ahmed Ben Bella (who today is a leading figure in the global anti-war movement and spoke at the recent Stop the War Coalition conference in London).

He was soon overthrown in a coup, and for the next two decades a one-party state dominated by the army and the official National Liberation Front party ran things.

They used the country's vast gas and oil wealth to develop industry. But by the 1980s the dream of independence and prosperity had been dashed for many Algerians.

A few at the top lived in luxury, but poverty, unemployment and hunger spread among the poor of the growing cities.

In 1988 people finally exploded in fury. Strikes, demonstrations and riots swept the capital, Algiers, and other cities.

The army brutally repressed the protests, shooting down over 500 people.

The regime tried to defuse further protest by granting limited political reform.

It allowed more opposition parties to form and to contest elections.

Most Algerians had long been Muslims. But political Islam—Islamism—had not been a major force in the country.

In the late 1980s, however, under the umbrella of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Islamists grew to be a key force.

This was not simply a matter of religious ideas. The FIS fed off the widespread poverty, the collapse of welfare provision in the slums of the cities, and the deepening bitterness against a regime seen as out of touch.

In 1989, for example, it was the FIS, through mosques and its local networks, that organised relief for victims of a major earthquake when the regime miserably failed to do so.

By 1992 the FIS had emerged as the biggest party in the first round of voting in national elections, and looked set to sweep the board in the second round of voting.

VIOLENCE HAS created orphans and refugees

The army high command panicked—though the FIS's key policies differed little from the regime's—and launched a coup.

There have been some elections since, but they were rigged to ensure the regime's candidates won.

Today people in Algeria talk of the "power", the shadowy group of generals who wield effective power whoever they may install as president.

After the 1992 coup the Islamists, who had been denied democratic avenues, launched armed actions against the regime.

The character of the war that began then has shifted since, with some people making deals with the regime while others have turned to ever more bloody actions. In all between 50,000 and 100,000 people have been killed in the last ten years.

This has taken place while poverty has mounted. An Algerian government survey indicated that between 1987 and 1996 average household income dropped by 36 percent.

Bleak

Unemployment today is running at well over 30 percent. Millions of young, often well educated people are unemployed and face a bleak future.

No wonder many look to leave in order to try and make something of their lives. Most who leave go to France—for linguistic reasons and because they may have family living in France. Some come to Britain.

Poverty in Algeria has been deepened by the privatisation and trade liberalisation policies pushed on the country by the IMF and the European Union.

The French paper *Le Monde* estimates that half a million Algerians have been thrown out of work as a direct result of this "restructuring" over recent years.

The civil war in Algeria has been presented in the media here as a battle in which the government is combating Islamist terror groups.

There are such Islamist groups carrying out killings in Algeria. The main ones are the GIA (Islamic Armed Groups) and another group known by its initials GSPC.

The core of the GIA

was formed by people financed by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and by the US CIA to fight in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

The GIA has carried out brutal attacks on civilians in Algeria, murdering tens of thousands of people. But there is clear evidence that the Algerian regime is up to its neck in the terror too.

In 2001 Habib Souadia, a former Algerian army lieutenant, published a book, *The Dirty War*, in which he detailed how the army carried out appalling massacres, some while pretending to be the GIA.

Cosy

Amnesty International and other human rights groups have made similar charges. Human Rights Watch also charges the regime with routinely carrying out "arbitrary arrest, disappearances and torture".

None of the major Western powers pay much attention to any of this. Instead they simply demonise "Islamists" and cosy up to the regime.

The European Union has signed an "association" agreement with the regime, and just before Christmas the US announced it was giving military aid to Algeria.

One important factor behind such support is straightforward.

Algeria is one of the world's biggest oil and, especially, natural gas producers.

Multinationals such as BP and the US firm Halliburton (once headed by US vice-president Dick Cheney) have major investments and contracts in the country.

Algeria also supplies one quarter of the European Union's natural gas. Spain, for example, depends on Algeria for over 75 percent of its gas, Portugal 100 percent, and Italy 55 percent.

Some of the people fleeing Algeria today are seeking to escape terror and repression from the army and government. Others are seeking to escape the terror of the most extreme of the Islamist groups.

Still more are simply fleeing the poverty which denies them any hope of a future, a poverty for which Western governments bear a major share of the responsibility.



31 OCTOBER in London: police confront anti-war protesters

HOW CAN WE STOP THE WAR?

TONY BLAIR is intent on following George Bush into a devastating and murderous war against Iraq. Fury at this has produced the biggest anti-war movement we've ever seen in Britain.

Opinion polls last week showed a mere 13 percent of people wholeheartedly supporting Bush and Blair. Even the BBC now talks about "majority opposition to the war". Yet war still seems probable.

What can we do about this? We cannot rely on normal parliamentary methods.

Blair refuses to allow parliament to vote on war in case it shows how unenthusiastic his own party is for war.

He hopes that once war has started he can use media hysteria about "stabbing our boys in the back" to force most of the parliamentary doubters into line.

"Parliamentary democracy" cannot stop Blair ignoring majority opinion.

The only way we can impede the drive towards war is to look to extra-parliamentary action and the power of a mass movement.

War is the hardest test governments face short of all-out revolution.

Wars are unpredictable. Governments do not know in advance how long wars will last or the degree to which they will produce bitter conflicts within their own societies.

Rulers across Europe expected the war that began in August 1914 to be over by Christmas. It dragged on for four years and led to the collapse of three of the empires that started it.

The US government first sent troops to Vietnam in the early 1960s believing they would easily subdue the local population.

When things go wrong in war, bitter social struggle can erupt at home, and discipline can begin to collapse within the armed forces themselves.

This happened during the First World War and again in the Vietnam War.

The bigger the open and organised opposition to the war, the more rapidly such social struggles can erupt and the more rapidly morale in the armed forces can collapse, turning foreign war into an uncontrollable domestic crisis.

This is why governments are always eager to build "consensus" for their wars. Collaboration in the war effort by all three mainstream parties and the trade union leaders was vital to British governments in both world wars.

After the 1982 Falklands War, Tory leaders made it clear that waging the war had depended on the support of the Labour opposition led by Michael Foot.

By contrast a Tory government abandoned its 1956 Suez war and ditched the prime minister, Anthony Eden. Part of the reason for that was the opposition of half the population, including the Labour Party and papers like the *Daily Mirror* and the *Observer*.

Blair knows he faces even bigger opposition today, despite the unity of the parliamentary front benches.

When the first big demonstration took place against the war on Afghanistan in October 2001 the media and the government ignored it. Government leaks showed that Blair was shocked by the size of the second demonstration two months later.

The huge 400,000-strong demonstration in September last year thrust its way into the media and pushed extra-parliamentary opposition to the war to the centre of the political agenda.

We know this was part of the reason George Bush spent months getting his resolution through the Security Council in the autumn.

His advisers warned there would be only limited support from US voters if he went to war without at least one major foreign ally, Britain.

Tony Blair told Bush that it would be easier to provide such support if he could line up other UN Security Council members.

There are reports that Blair has been urging further delay on Bush and, preferably, another UN Security Council motion, in an effort to weaken opposition to the war here.

In other words, the anti-war movement



GLOBAL PROTESTS—a million marched in Florence (main pic), Rumsfeld pushes for war (left), invading the CBI conference last year (centre), and US forces are preparing for murder (right)

has already had a significant effect. Demonstrating has made a difference.

What matters is not just what happens here and in the US.

A succession of field marshals, generals and former ambassadors have been warning Blair that there could be bitter fighting for control of Baghdad and that this could provoke upheavals against US-backed dictatorships elsewhere in the oil-rich Middle East.

People like US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld dismiss such forecasts, claiming that Saddam will fall at the first blow.

It is impossible to tell in advance who is right. But it is those with most knowledge of the Middle East in the British Foreign Office and the US State Department who are the most worried.

They know the Middle East's dictatorships will be safe so long as it is merely a matter of small, secret groups planting bombs against US and Israeli targets.

These are annoying, but at the end of the day the imperialist secret services can cope.

What they really fear is what happened to the US's biggest regional client in the 1970s, the Shah of Iran. A growing wave of massive demonstrations spurred the oil workers to strike and split the army, forcing the Shah to flee the country.

The globalisation of telecommunications means that today protests in one

part of the world spur protests elsewhere.

The mass demonstrations in Britain have been front page news across the world, contributing to the build-up of an international movement which expects to bring ten million people onto the streets on 15 February.

Simply to demonstrate opposition to war and then go home and sit back while Bush unleashes his bombers and his troops with Blair's connivance is not enough.

To stop war we need to go further, to radicalise the opposition and build more militant action.

THE DISCUSSION taking place within the anti-war movement about direct action is a recognition of this.

But there are different emphases about what kind of direct action people should look to.

There is a tradition in some left wing and peace circles of seeing direct action as something either cut off from or counterposed to mass action.

The emphasis is on small groups of people breaking into military bases remote from centres of population or undergoing special training in non-violent direct action.

There have even been cases of people going further when such methods do not work, and taking to violent actions in small groups.

This happened at one stage in the US movement against the Vietnam War with the formation of the Weather Underground, which planted bombs in military-related institutions.

Such small group actions cannot stop our rulers. They are like gnat bites on the war machine.

We do need militant, direct action. And such actions will at first involve minorities. But to be effective such actions need to aim to connect with the wider movement, and to encourage the biggest numbers of people that they too can take similar action.

This is because what really terrifies the warmongers are huge movements that shake the whole of the society on which the war machine's functioning depends.

What shook them during the First World War was the influence anti-war ideas eventually had on striking munitions workers and mutinying soldiers.

The movement against the Vietnam War had a real impact when mass demonstrations helped its message feed into the struggle for black liberation in 1968, produce occupations across hundreds of universities in 1970, and then infect the US army in Vietnam in 1971 and 1972.

The anti-war movement today is hundreds of times bigger than at the beginning of these wars.

We have to draw the widest number of people into it, and create the basis for

massive numbers of people taking direct action in the places where they work, study and live.

The Scottish train drivers who refused to move munitions recently gave a small but very significant sign of the kind of direct action that is possible. So did those students who occupied their colleges on the day of action against the war on 31 October.

Such actions are not always easy. They involve arguing with workmates and neighbours, as well as clashes with the powers that be.

But when they are successful, and when they spread to involve more and more people, they shake those powers in a way in which minority actions cut off from the mass of people never do.

Work in this direction has to begin in the three-week build-up to 15 February.

We need to move on from big all-city rallies against the war to the building of groups of anti-war activists in every workplace, in every faculty of every university and every site of every sixth form centre and FE college, in every locality.

Everywhere we have to carry the argument that Blair has no mandate to bomb and kill in our name and we are going to do our utmost to stop him.

Everything we do has to be directed to this end. This does not mean activists waiting for everyone else to move. It does mean measuring what we do by our

ability to draw others behind us.

The British police hinted in recent discussions about the organisation of anti-war protests that what really worried them was not old-style "civil disobedience" but something much more serious, "civil unrest".

This is the ultimate fear of any government heading for war.

Late in 1966, US president Lyndon Johnson's generals told him of computer calculations showing the impact of using the same methods against the North Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, as had been used against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Johnson replied, "I have one question to ask your computers—will you feed into it how long it will take 500,000 angry Americans to climb the White House wall out there and lynch their president if he does something like that?"

We have to ensure that Tony Blair has similar nightmares about the impact of war on Iraq.

The next step in doing so is in turning the whole of central London into one massive anti-war demonstration on 15 February.

The bigger that demonstration the greater the potential to build beyond it to the mass, militant action that can challenge and stop the war.

A huge angry march can become a springboard to the mass "civil unrest" that the authorities fear.



## NEW REPORT SHOWS TRANSFORMATION OF CHILDCARE

# Family is changing but equality is long way off

**HOW MANY** dads get laughed at today if they take their child out to the shops, pushing a pram?

I remember a TV documentary where one man described how he was ridiculed when he pushed his daughter in a pram to the shops.

That was Britain in the 1950s. Today it is common to see men taking care of their children in public.

In just two generations the expectations about men's role in childcare have undergone a dramatic transformation.

A new report, *Working Fathers: Earning and Caring*, produced by the Equal Opportunities Commission, provides new confirmation of this.

The survey of 7,500 fathers shows that there has been a marked increase in the time that fathers spend taking care of their children.

In the mid-1970s fathers of children under the age of five devoted less than a quarter of an hour each day to looking after children.

By the late 1990s that had increased to two hours a day. Today the time dads spend with their children accounts for about one third of all childcare.

As the survey says, "In everyday life traditional dimensions of the good father, such as providing for the material welfare of the family, take place alongside activities previously considered solely maternal, such as bathing infants."

*Over a third of mothers working full time said that the child's father was the main carer, followed by grandparents and then other relatives.*

When both parents are doing full time jobs, two thirds of mothers and three quarters of fathers report equal sharing of bathing and dressing their children, and cooking.

All this does not mean that sexual divisions at home do not exist.

We still live in a sexist society, where women earn at best only 80 percent of men's wages and where sexism dominates every institution from the courts to the portrayal of women on TV and in magazines.

But the survey shows that the old stereotypes—of a woman chained to the kitchen sink and of the man down the pub—no longer match the reality of people's lives.

It totally contradicts the idea that men and women's roles are natural and unchanging. Some feminists reinforce this idea by arguing that men have always oppressed, and gained from oppressing, women.

Many ordinary men and women struggle hard to achieve more equality in their lives.

The survey found that men, especially young men, would like to be more involved in caring for their children and do more at home.

They are prevented not by some in-built sexism, but because they come up



Picture: JESS HURD



## MEN'S AND women's roles inside the family have changed dramatically in the last 30 years

considerably. The same is true for fathers who work "atypical hours"—doing evening or night work.

Men suffering from overwork, tiredness and stress are less likely "to share family meals, to read, play and help children with homework, and to be involved in recreational activities or to do the shopping".

*Yet fathers grasp the opportunity at weekends to spend time with their children, and do as much as six hours a day childcare and housework.*

The family is often viewed as an unchanging institution.

But the form of the family, and the roles within it, have dramatically changed over the last 200 or so years as capitalism has developed.

The most important change since the

Second World War has been the mass entry of women into paid work.

This has had a huge impact on gender roles and on the expectations and attitudes of both men and women.

Today most women do some kind of paid work outside the home.

Around 65 percent of women with dependent children go out to work, including a majority of women with children under five.

Unlike the lives of our grandmothers or great-grandmothers, most women's lives today are no longer centred solely on childbirth, child-rearing and housework.

While capitalism ushers in changes that can give a glimpse of a new way of organising our lives, at the same time it stunts, limits and distorts those changes.

**Hazel Croft**

## A system which continues to keep women down

THE OPPRESSION of women is vital for capitalism.

The ruling class want women in the workforce—preferably on lower wages and worse conditions than men.

It does not want to invest in the kind of childcare, or maternity and paternity benefits, which would enable men and women to live more equal lives.

It suits the ruling class to load all the responsibility for children's welfare and upbringing onto the family rather than the whole of society.

This is what Marxists have called "privatised reproduction".

The oppression of women is upheld by all the institutions of capitalist society—work, schools, housing, healthcare, the courts, and the social security system.

*A woman's main role is still seen as revolving around being a wife, partner or mother—whatever the reality.*

Despite the many changes that have taken place in our lives over the last few decades, capitalism cannot deliver true equality or liberation.

All women are oppressed, with only a tiny minority of fabulously wealthy women being able to escape the harshest aspects through employing maids,

cleaners, cooks and so on.

Men's and women's roles in childcare are related to the class-divided society we live in.

Capitalism ensures the continuation of inequality.

A woman may want to be the main breadwinner in her family and a man to be the main child carer.

Because women earn less than men, the pressure is on the woman to stay at home or work part time, while her partner does long hours, overtime and shifts that bring in more money.

New Labour talks about equality, but it wants to shore up an image of

the family that ensures inequality.

So we get continual lectures about bad parents creating criminals and drug addicts, attacks on single parents and the like.

But the government doesn't provide the resources and support that would enable people to develop good relationships with their children.

The whole thrust of New Labour's policies—privatisation, flexibility, welfare cuts—piles even more pressure onto families and makes it harder to cope.

To achieve true equality and liberation we need to fight against the capitalist system.

### History

#### Understanding and resisting oppression

THE MARXIST tradition has analysed how women's oppression and the family are linked to the rise and structure of class society.

Frederick Engels' book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* was a path-breaking analysis of this.

He wrote that the rise of class society signalled the rise of women's oppression, "the world historic defeat of the female sex".

For over 90 percent of the time humans have existed, people lived in small nomadic hunter-gatherer bands in which childcare was the responsibility of all.

It was only with the development of the productive forces, and the control of a surplus by a minority, that women became excluded from key areas of production because of their reproductive role.

The Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai said that the basis of women's oppression lay in the role of the family in class society.

Under capitalism the major responsibility for caring for children was left to individuals, mainly women, inside the family.

Rulers and politicians preached family morality at workers. Yet at the same time capitalism wrecked people's family lives.

Kollontai said, "What 'family life', in which the man and wife work in the factory in different departments? What 'family life' when father and mother are out of the home 24 hours of the day, most of which are spent at hard labour, and cannot spend a few minutes with their children?"

The development of capitalism had drawn more women into the workforce. This put a "triple burden" on women.

"The wife, the mother, who is a worker, sweats blood to fill three tasks at the same time: to give the necessary working hours as her husband does, then to devote herself as well as she can to her household, and then also to take care of her children."

Kollontai argued that only socialism could provide the collective facilities that could lift domestic drudgery from women and lay the basis for liberation.

### Britain today

#### The pressures on our relationships

- British fathers work 46.1 hours per week—the longest in Europe.
- One in eight fathers work over 60 hours per week.
- There are 600,000 children living in poverty, but only 42,000 subsidised nursery places for disadvantaged families.
- Maternity pay in Britain is the third worst in Europe. Fathers will be granted paid paternity leave from April this year. It will only be for two weeks.

### ↓Links

*Working Fathers: Earning and Caring* can be downloaded from [www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/news/13\\_jan\\_fathers\\_uea.asp](http://www.eoc.org.uk/cseng/news/13_jan_fathers_uea.asp)

Alexandra Kollontai on *Women's Liberation*.

*Sex, Class and Socialism* by Lindsey German is the best recent analysis of women's oppression.

Both these books are available from Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848.



## in my view

### Blunkett trashes anti-racist fight

IT'S A fair bet that when Doreen and Neville Lawrence accepted their OBEs in the new year they had no idea the report they had fought so hard for would be tossed into the bin by the home secretary.

That is exactly what happened last week when David Blunkett said that "the slogan created a year or two ago about institutional racism missed the point".

In one sentence Blunkett trashed the Macpherson report into the murder of Stephen Lawrence.

This had argued that the police's failure to catch the young black man's racist killers was not the product of a few "bad apples", but flowed from racism rooted in the structures of society.

The Macpherson report has been rightly criticised as too weak in its conclusions and recommendations. But in identifying institutional racism at the heart of the problem it marked a step forward—one that the powers that be have been keen to roll back.

**The previous report into police racism, the Scarman report into the 1981 Brixton riots, had rejected any idea that the police was a racist institution.**

It argued that there were just a few ignorant coppers around who didn't like black people.

Blunkett has gone back to this.

You can see why Blunkett is keen to avoid any analysis of race that points to the fundamental workings of capitalist society.

At the time of the Macpherson inquiry I remember going to a meeting in Tottenham where a black man stood up and said, "The state is on trial here!" His analysis was shared by many more around Britain.

#### Rotten housing

As the inquiry went on, the Metropolitan Police fought a rearguard attempt to stop "institutionalised racism" from being put into the report.

But this isn't an argument over words. It is about racism and where it comes from.

Blunkett is trying to steer the focus of tackling racism away from institutions and those in power towards the individual and those at the bottom of society.

He has attempted to blame the victims of racism for their own oppression. Last year Blunkett was asked what he thought caused racism.

**He replied that "deprived people are frightened of change, they are frightened of an influx of different cultures, different people coming into the area".**

In other words, it's those nasty working class people who create racism. No one is saying that racism doesn't exist in our communities, but that is not where the roots of racism lie.

Ordinary white people do not have the power to turn black people down for jobs, arrest them on trumped-up charges and throw them in jail, put them in rotten housing or pass laws to keep them out of the country. Neither do they own the media that pumps out racism daily.

The 1960s Black Power activists Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton famously argued that institutional racism "originates in the operation of established and respected forces in society".

They said that if we are to tackle racism then this is where we have to take the fight.

Blunkett hates the concept of institutional racism because he is part of a government that defends "established and respected forces in society". These are the forces that perpetuate and benefit from racism.

Blunkett said, "Prosperity starts to diminish the most overt racism."

Let's test this one out. Paul Dacre, editor of the race-baiting *Daily Mail*, got £830,000 last year, Iain Duncan Smith is on £120,000, and David Blunkett gets £125,000-plus.

Prosperity didn't make anti-racists out of this bunch, did it?

by HASSAN MAHAMDALLIE

film

# Eminem raps to a different beat

by PAT STACK

**IN THE film *8 Mile*, Rabbit is a young white rapper attempting to deal with his anger and alienation through music.**

The part is played by the US rapper Eminem.

Rabbit lives in a trailer on the poor, predominantly black side of town with his kid sister, their mother (Kim Basinger) and her redneck boyfriend.

The film starkly portrays urban decay. It shows the reasons for what would seem at first sight to be mindless vandalism, but are in fact little acts of rebellion.

It also portrays brilliantly a world of street poetry, where no occasion or incident, no matter how trivial, passes the troubadours by without poetic comment.

These verbal clashes of linguistic dexterity are terrific. Some are impromptu, others formally organised bouts.

**The latter lie at the core of the story.**

Rabbit attempts to win the bout, and therefore conquer his personal demons, to give his life some meaning and direction.

The scene of the final bout is a terrific piece of cinema, and the end has a sad ambiguity to it.

Ever since he burst onto the scene, Eminem has been a highly controversial figure, loathed and adored in equal measure.

The right detest him.

But so did many on the left, who never got far beyond criticising some objectionable lyrics.

In the process they failed to spot the talent, or consider

**EMINEM (left) in a scene from the film *8 Mile***

why so many were in awe of, and inspired by, his music.

This film now introduces us to Eminem the actor, and it works. His performance is natural and convincing.

What, though, of the controversial side of Eminem? In part the film appears to want to give him something

of a makeover.

The attitudes expressed in his lyrics towards gays or women have frequently been vicious.

Here, however, we see Rabbit defending a gay workmate who is being abused by others. The defence may not be the most

sophisticated. Nevertheless it is clearly there for a purpose.

Rabbit expresses much of the anger you will find in Eminem's music, but without the bile that marks some of his work.

This movie is not merely an extended Eminem video.

It explores poverty, anger, alienation, escape and hope, and does so very successfully.

Eminem fans will love it. I suspect, though, that its appeal will be broader than that. Even if you're not a fan, it's certainly worth going to see.

film

## Ghetto film hits all the key notes

**THE PIANIST is based on the account by Wladyslaw Szpilman, an accomplished pianist, of his survival of the Warsaw Ghetto.**

When the Nazis invaded Warsaw in September 1939, 360,000 of the city's one million population were Jewish.

By the time the Nazis retreated in January 1945 only 20 Jews were left alive.

This film, directed by Roman Polanski, follows Szpilman and his family from the invasion of Poland in 1939 through their descent into segregation and life in the ghetto.

Polanski shows how the Nazis threw the Jews

by RICHARD McEWAN

into the ghetto. The family tries to come to terms with the unfolding nightmare.

The film shows the arbitrary brutality of the Nazis and the horrific conditions in the ghetto.

*This is shocking, and sudden and final in a way that I have never seen in a film about the Holocaust before.*

Adrien Brody (the actor playing Szpilman) offsets this in the subtlety of emotion and depth of character he brings to Szpilman.

We see many personal and collective signs of

resistance in this film, such as Szpilman hiding guns for the heroic ghetto resistance.

He escapes the ghetto and "resettlement" to Treblinka (a death camp) after being saved by one of the ghetto's Jewish police officers. The rest of his family is sent to be exterminated.

But the turning point of the film, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising where 40,000 insurgent Jews held off the Nazis for almost a month with few weapons, is watched from a distance.

Though Polanski does not ignore its significance, it is understated. But Polanski's finale is a magnificent statement about humanity.

book

## House divided against itself

THIS NEW edition of *Our House in the Last World*, the first novel by Cuban-American writer Oscar Hijuelos, tells the story of the Santinio family, who leave Cuba to emigrate to New York in the 1940s.

The novel begins with the story of Mercedes and Alejo, young lovers who will become the mother and father of two children, Hector and Horacio.

It follows how the dreams of the young Alejo and Mercedes turn sour, unable to realise their promised hopes of the US.

**Alejo never makes good his plans to own a small business.**

He ends up as a poorly paid chef. Mercedes becomes crushed and resentful, as Alejo becomes violent, drunk and sentimental by turns.

The Santinios' younger son, Hector, is caught between the old Cuban world of his parents and the US of which he feels a part.

**He finds it difficult to speak Spanish and doesn't know how to react to his Cuban relations.**

The Cuban Revolution, Castro and the excitement of the 1960s appear in the book indirectly. Alejo's friends include anti-Castro refugees, and avowed Communists.

Oscar Hijuelos has a beautiful writing style that captures the feeling of being trapped between two cultures.

He does not romanticise the Cuban immigrant community, nor Cuba before or after 1959.

by JAMIE ALLISON



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IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE

Big ideas in informal settings

Marxist forums

BARNLEY

Vietnam: when the US was humbled

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm, Library, Shambles St.

BIRKENHEAD

Palestine: can it be free?

Tue 28 Jan, 7.30pm, Oxton Green Community Centre, Christchurch Rd.

BIRMINGHAM HANDSWORTH

Palestine: can it ever be free?

Wed 30 Jan, 7.30pm, Summerfield Community Centre.

BIRMINGHAM KINGSHEATH

Vietnam: when a superpower was humbled

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Dance Workshop, Mosely Rd.

BLACKWOOD

Latin America in revolt

Mon 27 Jan, 7.15pm, Blackwood Miners' Institute.

With Pete Jackson.

BOLTON

How do we fight fascism?

Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm, Green Room, Bolton Library.

BRADFORD

What are the roots of Zionism?

Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm, Bradford Library, Princes St.

BRISTOL BEDMINSTER

Can war lead to revolution?

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Southville Centre, Beaufey Rd.

BRISTOL EASTON

Are women equal today?

Sun 26 Jan, 4pm, Cafe Matreiya, St Mark's Rd.

BURNLEY

What lies behind the US drive to war?

Tue 11 Feb, 7.30pm, Shalamar, Church St.

CAMBRIDGE

Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?

Thu 23 Jan, 7.30pm, CB2, Norfolk St.



COLCHESTER

Popular culture: does it have to be dumbed down?

Mon 27 Jan, 8pm, RAD Hall, Southway.

With Chris Bambery.

CRAWLEY

Palestine: can it ever be free?

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Three Bridges Community Centre, Gales Place.

With Cath Senker.

EXETER

Vietnam: when the US was humbled

Wed 22 Jan, 6pm, Dinosaur Cafe (nr clocktower).

With Matt Gordon.

GLOUCESTER

The Black Panthers

Thu 23 Jan, 5.30pm, Warehouse, Parliament St.

HARLOW

Is violence ever justified?

Wed 29 Jan, 8pm, Polly's Pantry, Wych Elm.

With Kambiz Boomla.

HUDDERSFIELD

Can the trade unions challenge capitalism?

Thu 23 Jan, 6pm, Coffeerevolution, Wood St.

LEEDS HEADINGLEY

Are women equal today?

Sun 26 Jan, 6pm, Deli Katessen Coffee Bar, Hyde Park Corner.

LIVERPOOL AIGBURTH

Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm, Collect Gallery, Lark Lane.

LIVERPOOL CENTRE

The grand strategy of the American Empire

Tue 4 Feb, 7.15pm, Casa, Hope St.

LIVERPOOL TOXTETH

The grand strategy of the American Empire

Thu 23 Jan, 7.30pm, Yemeni Community Centre, Lodge Lane.

LUTON

Malcolm X and the struggle for black liberation

Mon 3 Feb, 7pm, CoMotion Coffee Bar (next to Thistle Hotel).

MANCHESTER CHORLTON

Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?

Mon 27 Jan, 7.30pm, Chorlton Library.

STOP THE War Coalition activists struck a chord campaigning in Whitechapel, east London, last Saturday. Socialist Workers Party members, along with a whole range of others, are throwing themselves into building the biggest possible anti-war movement in the run-up to the 15 February demo in London. Picture: SOCIALIST WORKER

MANCHESTER WITHINGTON

Palestine: how can it be free?

Thu 6 Feb, 6.30pm, Withington Library, Wilmslow Rd.

NEWCASTLE EAST

Gun crime, racism and rap

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Chillingham, Heaton.

NEWCASTLE WEST

The bloody history of British imperialism

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Linwood Centre (off West Rd).

NEWPORT

Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?

Tue 4 Feb, 7.30pm, USR Room, Newport Centre.

NORTHAMPTON

Islam, resistance and revolution

Thu 30 Jan, 7pm, Cafe Msaada, Kettering Rd (nr Picturedome).

NOTTINGHAM CITY CENTRE

What would real democracy be like?

Wed 29 Jan, 1pm, Rat & Parrot, Woolaton St.

NOTTINGHAM HYSON GREEN

Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?

Wed 29 Jan, 7pm, Forestfield Community Centre, Sturton St.

NOTTINGHAM SHERWOOD

What lies behind the US drive to war?

Mon 27 Jan, 7.30pm, The Place, Melrose St.

OLDHAM

How do we fight fascism?

Thu 30 Jan, 7pm, West Indian Community Centre, Horsedge St.

OXFORD

Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Mitre, High St.

PORTSMOUTH

The bloody history of the British Empire

Sun 26 Jan, 7pm, Citrus Cafe, Albert Rd.

PRESTON

Marx: the first anti-capitalist?

Tue 28 Jan, 7.30pm, Unity Community Centre, Shepherd St.

READING

Che Guevara: the man behind the T-shirt

Mon 27 Jan, 7.30pm, International Solidarity Centre, London St.

SCUNTHORPE

Can the trade unions challenge capitalism?

Mon 3 Feb, 7pm, Central Community Centre, Lindum St (opp bus stn).

SHEFFIELD CITY CENTRE

The grand strategy of the American Empire

Thu 23 Jan, 6pm, Coffee Revolution, Church St.

SHEFFIELD FIRTH PARK

Vietnam: when the US was humbled

Tue 28 Jan, 7.30pm, Brushes Community Centre, West Quadrant.

SHEFFIELD HEELEY

Vietnam: when the US was humbled

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm, Hartley Street Community Centre.

With Dave Hayes.

SHEFFIELD NETHER EDGE

Vietnam: when the US was humbled

Sat 1 Feb, 7.30pm, TC's internet cafe, Abbeydale Rd.

With Phil Turner.

SHEFFIELD PARKHILL

Empire: the bloody history of British imperialism

Thu 30 Jan, 6pm, Bard Street Community Centre.

SHEFFIELD SHARROW

Advertising the body: why sexism sells

Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm, Highfields Library, London Rd.

SOUTHAMPTON

The Holocaust: could it happen again?

Thu 23 Jan, 8pm, Cook House, 15 St Mary's St.

With Martin Smith.

ST ALBANS

What kind of revolutionary was Malcolm X?

Mon 3 Feb, 7.30pm, upstairs at Trinity Church (cnr Beaconsfield Rd/Victoria St).

WATFORD

Marx: the first anti-capitalist?

Thu 23 Jan, 7.30pm, Costa Coffee, High St.

With Chris Bambery.

WIGAN

The grand strategy of the American Empire

Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm, Wigan Pier.

YORK

Noam Chomsky and the politics of resistance

Tue 28 Jan, 8pm, Priory Street Centre.

BRIXTON

Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?

Mon 27 Jan, 7pm, Dogstar, Coldharbour Lane.

CLAPHAM

The grand strategy of the American Empire

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Clapham Community Centre, Venn St.

CROYDON

Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?

Thu 23 Jan, 7.30pm, Spice Cafe, Surrey St.

With Pete Morgan.

EAST HAM

Why is war central to capitalism?

Wed 5 Feb, 6.30pm, Indo-Ceylon Cafe, St John's Rd (off High St North).

ELEPHANT & WALWORTH

Empire: the bloody history of British imperialism

Mon 27 Jan, 7.30pm, Pullens Centre, Crompton St.

ELTHAM

How do we fight fascism?

Tue 28 Jan, 7.30pm, St Mary's Community Centre, Eltham High St.

ENFIELD

Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm, Edmonton Green Leisure Centre, Plevna Rd.

With Pete Jackson.

EUSTON

The grand strategy of the American Empire

Wed 29 Jan, 6.30pm, Cafe Muse, Museum St.

With Michael Bradley.

FINSBURY PARK

Can the trade unions challenge capitalism?

Thu 23 Jan, 7.30pm, Gadz Cafe, 45 Clifton Terrace (opp Finsbury Park ☺).

With Pete Jackson.

HACKNEY DALSTON

Vietnam: when a superpower was humbled

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Centreprise, Kingsland High St.

HACKNEY HOMERTON

Drugs, guns and racism: what's the solution?

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm, Barnabas Centre, Homerton High St.

HACKNEY LONDON FIELDS

Can the US Empire be stopped?

Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm, Queensbridge Sport & Community Centre, 30 Holly St.

HACKNEY SHOREDITCH

Marx: the first anti-capitalist?

Thu 30 Jan, 8pm, Barley Mow (cnr Curtain Rd/Rivington St).

HACKNEY STAMFORD HILL

Why is war central to capitalism?

Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm, Cyprus House Cafe, 8 Manor Parade.

HOLBORN

Martin Luther King

Wed 29 Jan, 6pm, Africa Centre, King St, Covent Garden.

With Martin Smith.

ILFORD

Gandhi, non-violence and Indian independence

Thu 23 Jan, 7.30pm, Kohi-Noor, 52 Ilford Lane.

LADBROKE GROVE

The grand strategy of the American Empire

Tue 4 Feb, 7.30pm, Green Room, Paddington Arts Centre, Woodfield Rd.

LEYTONSTONE

Israel: the hijack state

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Prospero's Coffee Shop, Church Lane.

MUSWELL HILL

Is Labour still a working class party?

Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm, Sasa Thai restaurant.

NEW CROSS

Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?

Tue 28 Jan, 7pm, Moonbow Jake's, New Cross Rd.

POPLAR & ISLE OF DOGS 1917:

when revolution stopped war

Wed 29 Jan, 7pm, Island House (cnr Roserton St/Castelia St).

With Carol Williams.

SEVEN SISTERS

Can war lead to revolution?

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Duygu Turkish restaurant, West Green Rd.

TUFNELL PARK

Vietnam: when the US was humbled

Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm, Rustique Literary Cafe, Fortress Rd.

With Pat Stack.

VICTORIA

Malcolm X and the fight for black liberation

Thu 30 Jan, 6.30pm, City Harvest Cafe, Buckingham Palace Rd.

WALTHAMSTOW

Revolution: is it possible?

Thu 23 Jan, 7.45pm, Quaker Meeting House, 1A Jewel Rd (off Hoe St).

WOOLWICH

Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?

Wed 29 Jan, 7.30pm, Earl of Chatham, Thomas St.

**INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION**  
The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

**REVOLUTION NOT REFORM**  
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

**THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD**  
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers. The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia. At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system. Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

**INTERNATIONALISM**  
The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We oppose racism and imperialism. We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements. The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism. We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays.

**THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY**  
To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class. We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

Fill in this form and send it to  
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www.resist.org.uk

☎ 020 7053 2071

Stop the War Coalition

www.stopwar.org.uk

☎ 020 7053 2155/6

Socialist Alliance

www.socialistalliance.net

☎ 020 7791 3138

Defend Council Housing

www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

☎ 020 7987 9989

Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers

www.defend-asylum.org

☎ 07941 566 183

Spark

☎ 07905 998 675

Scottish Socialist Party

☎ 0141 221 7714

Local SWP

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07881 558 590

Birmingham

07949 028 362

Black Country

07941 834 125

Bradford

07811 403 299

Brighton

07808 368 551

Bristol

07711 718 519

Cambridge

07950 142 464

Camden & Islington

07961 337 640

Cardiff

07815 775 819

Central London

07957 316 094

Chesterfield

07881 558 590

Coventry

07712 047 873

East Anglia

07946 269 024

East London

07753 697 743

Exeter

07939 558 115

Hackney

07788 770 741

Home Counties

07905 589 865

Kent

07950 610 257

Lancashire East

07968 952 180

Lancashire West

07931 725 633

Leeds & West Yorkshire

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Norwich

07733 137 201

Nottingham

07956 477 778

Plymouth

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Portsmouth

07801 290 411

Scotland (SW Platform)

07855 023 739

Sheffield

07905 678 506

South East London

07951 737 003

South London

07939 017 973

Southampton

07811 210 036

Swansea

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# FIREFIGHTERS: JOBS AND THE SERVICE AT RISK

# 'Get the strike back onto the offensive'

**This is Canberra. Your street next?**

**"IT'S A fight on two sides now, and everybody knows it. It's not just over pay. I've just seen Prescott on the TV and he's out to break our union and slash the UK fire service."**

That's what Mark Barter from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in Bedfordshire told *Socialist Worker* as firefighters and control staff launched their third strike on Tuesday.

It was a similar message from every station as 52,000 FBU members struck solidly.

The strike was a defiant answer to the government. For thousands of FBU activists it was a chance to renew their long-running campaign.

Reports from picket lines show it continues to enjoy popular support.

**But FBU leaders planned talks with the employers this week and signalled that the strike could be enough to make sufficient gains through negotiations.**

The government, however, is insisting local authority employers make no concessions.

Instead ministers have told them to drive through the programme of cuts and longer working hours cooked up by Sir George Bain's sham review of the fire service.

As firefighters took to the picket lines and set up street collections their feelings of bitterness with New Labour were deeper than ever.

"This Labour government has alienated the hearts and minds of tens of thousands of people who should be its natural supporters,"

by KEVIN OVENDEN

said John Drake from Gloucestershire FBU.

"They've lost that already, no matter what happens in our dispute.

"It's not just among FBU members here in Gloucestershire, which is hardly a hotbed of militancy.

"Hundreds of people have opted out of paying money to the Labour Party and many longstanding party members have resigned.

"Other trade unionists and working people share what we are going through.

"Quite simply people are shocked that the government is brazenly answering our call for decent pay with totally unacceptable demands for cuts."

## Suburbs

The heart-rending experience of tens of thousands of people on the other side of the globe has showed just what the Bain cuts could mean if they were implemented here.

Thousands of households had been evacuated from the Australian capital, Canberra, as fires raged out of control through the city's suburbs.

The Australian government drove through Bain-style cuts and New Labour "reforms" a few years ago.

The result is a fire service incapable of dealing with the fires now threatening thousands of homes.

At the start of this week the Canberra authorities were reduced to calling on people evacuated from the most threatened areas to return to their homes to fight the fires themselves.

Imagine what would happen to the fire service here if the government gets away with axing 4,500 firefighters' posts and 150 stations.

FIRES BURNED in Australia last weekend—cuts similar to those planned in Britain have gutted the fire service

## BACK FBU MEMBERS No mood to retreat

**BIRMINGHAM:** Members of the FBU and other trade unionists lobbied the appeal by FBU activist Steve Godward in Birmingham last week against his sacking.

The union sees what has happened to Steve, who also stood as a Socialist Alliance candidate at the general election, as a clear case of victimisation.

The procedure at the appeal confirmed that. It found Steve guilty and jumped straight to upholding his sacking without even hearing the mitigation.

Embarrassed employers' representatives had to backtrack and adjourn announcing their final decision for three weeks.

There is little doubt, however, that they want to drive Steve out of the fire service.

Union activists are calling for action to defend Steve.

National union leaders have maintained since the start of the dispute that it will not be settled if any union member remains victimised.

**HAMPSHIRE:** The campaign to reinstate sacked FBU activist Simon Green in Hampshire is gathering pace.

Simon was sacked under "capability procedures" which will become endemic across the fire service if the employers get their way.

A union meeting at Simon's station in Basingstoke attracted support from across the brigade on Tuesday.

A mass meeting of FBU members in Hampshire was planned for Thursday of this week, to be addressed by FBU general secretary Andy Gilchrist.

The Hampshire FBU committee is to consider calling for a strike ballot over Simon's sacking and local capability procedures at the end of next week.

**MANCHESTER:** The Stalybridge branch of the Manchester FBU called on Monday for the reinstatement of Bob Ponder, who has been suspended by the union from his position as secretary of the FBU in

the city.

**Moss Side branch has also come out in support of Bob. He was disciplined by the union's executive for speaking out against it calling off strikes before Christmas.**

There was applause also at the 100-strong meeting of local FBU officials last week when speakers raised Bob's case.

He now faces a hearing at the FBU executive on Monday 17 February and is calling for a supportive lobby.

## Scottish protest

THE Scottish region of the FBU has called a demonstration in Glasgow for Saturday 1 February. The march has the backing of the STUC and assembles at 12 noon (venue to be announced).

THE FBU executive called Tuesday's strike after fire bosses, under government direction, effectively broke off negotiations and insisted that the union must "unreservedly commit" to the Bain cuts package.

On the executive council of the FBU there was reportedly "no mood" for suspending this week's strike and two further 48-hour stoppages called for next Tuesday and Saturday.

That was a reflection of the determination of rank and file firefighters and union activists to hit back after strikes were suspended before Christmas in return for fruitless talks.

Prescott blusters about facing down the FBU, but his central strategy is to get strikes called off and then tie up union officials in negotiations.

There were loud calls at a 100-strong meeting of FBU local officials on Friday of last week not to suspend strikes or to fall for Prescott's trap of "talk, don't walk".

Ian Foulkes from Merseyside told *Socialist Worker* after that meeting, "We are in the fight of our lives.

"There's absolutely no reason why, if our national officials feel they have to go into talks, that we have to call off action. We have got to put the pressure back on the government and employers."

Mark Barter from Bedfordshire said as the strike began:

"The aim this week has to be to seize back the initiative from the government.

"When the union called off action before Christmas it was for talks that were supposed to last a week.

"That became two weeks and then three weeks and then we ended up with the Bain report.

"Prescott said nothing for weeks. Then he's suddenly all over the TV this week. It is because we are on strike.

**"We've been on the defensive. We have to get back on the offensive.**

"I'm hoping the executive maintain the tempo now. We've got the other two 48-hour strikes and they must go ahead unless the government seriously meets our claim.

"There was a loss of momentum. We've redoubled efforts in Bedfordshire to overcome that by making

links with other groups of workers, particularly in the public sector.

"The mood to win is still there and a clear lead now can build it up. But we can't have the uncertainty of not knowing whether action is going to be on or off."

**The employers are divided over how hard a line to take.**

They reportedly dropped at the weekend their insistence that the union must "unreservedly" sign up to Bain, and removed the headline figure on job cuts.

That tiny concession is about getting FBU general secretary Andy Gilchrist into talks (with strikes suspended) where those cuts will remain the employers' overriding aim.

The manoeuvres by the employers and Prescott do show they cannot simply ignore the strikes and fear further action. This can become a focus for solidarity from other trade unionists.

"The feeling at our mass meeting in Glasgow last week was that we should fight to win and that we can win," said Kenny Ross from Strathclyde FBU. "People do not want to retreat."

Picture: PA PHOTOS



**Make sure you get copies of Red Watch, the voice of rank and file firefighters and control staff. It can be ordered from 07973 521 594 or 07939 021 094.**



## In brief

### Lecturers willing to fight for pay

THE NATFHE union's special further education (FE) sector conference has voted unanimously for escalating strike action if the employers fail to make an acceptable offer at their meeting with the FE unions next Wednesday.

The strikes last May and November were crucial to getting the government to put extra money into colleges.

So far the employers have only offered 2.3 percent, which will widen the gap with teachers, whose pay this year has increased by 5 percent.

Our claim is still parity with teachers by 2004.

**GEOFF BROWN**

### Driving towards a pay strike

MEMBERS OF the TGWU union who work for the Peugeot car maker have rejected a new pay offer by their bosses.

Some 54 percent of the 2,000 workers balloted said no to the offer.

The result of the ballot of 800 Amicus union members was not known as *Socialist Worker* went to press.

Union meetings were set for later this week to discuss holding one-day strikes.

**GERRY JONES**

### Stop press... Vote for action

JOURNALISTS AT the *Bradford Telegraph & Argus* and other Bradford titles owned by the Newsquest company have voted for strikes over pay.

An 87 percent vote by members of the NUJ union backed the action. They have decided to start their fight with a series of two-day strikes, on 30-31 January, 10-11 February and 19-20 February.

Journalists at the *Westmoreland Gazette* in Kendal, Cumbria, have also voted 100 percent for action on pay.

●**Full reports next week**

### A fight for union democracy

EVERY MEMBER of the PCS civil servants' union will receive a ballot paper next month to vote on increasing union democracy.

General secretary Mark Serwotka has insisted on putting last year's conference decisions in favour of annual delegate conferences and annual national executive elections to the membership.

This is despite opposition from the misnamed union group the Moderates.

Union vice-president Steve Cawkwell has called for a massive campaign to win the ballot.

**MARTIN JOHN**

■**For more information and to get involved in the campaign e-mail PCSLeft Unity@tesco.net or go to www.mogtv.com/civilunrest**

### A small step on the right road

SOME 600 civil servants in the Prospect union at the Scottish Agricultural College are set to ballot on an improved offer from their management from the end of this week.

Management originally offered nothing. Union members started a work to rule and struck for three hours two weeks ago.

Bosses are now offering 0.5 percent.

"It's a step in the right direction," says union rep Joy Gladstone. "But not a big step. We're not actively supporting the offer. We want to see what the members want."

## Education

# Stop these cruel tests

THE HERTFORDSHIRE branch of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) has launched a nationwide campaign against the government's regime of compulsory testing for all seven, 11 and 14 year olds.

These tests—SATs—have become a curse for pupils, parents and teachers alike.

Too many primary schools have become production lines for test results which New Labour wants to use for the obsecenity of school league tables.

In secondary schools too everything is now geared towards test results.

Pupils in England face up to 105 compulsory test papers at school.

The children's charity Child-line reports that more than one in ten of their calls from children below the age of 11 are about exam stress!

The NUT nationally is calling for a ballot for the boycott of some tests. This is a welcome start, but we have to go further.

A complete boycott of SATs

by **JON BERRY**

would be a massive nail in the coffin for New Labour's plans to turn the clock back to the days of selective, non-comprehensive education.

Already over 20 union branches and dozens of individuals have signed up to the Herts NUT anti-SATs campaign.

What we need now is the broadest possible coalition of teachers, parents and all trade unionists, not just teachers.

■**For more information about the campaign phone Jon Berry, secretary Herts NUT on 01727 835 554 or e-mail secretary@hertfordshirenut.org.uk**

## Norwich buses

BUS STRIKES in Norwich have been suspended after management made workers a new offer last week.

Some 350 drivers working for the First Group firm in the town recently went on strike for seven days in protest at being made to work longer driving hours.

The strike was solid and workers held lively picket lines, stopping some agency workers from going into work.

Now management have told the workers' TGWU union

officials that they will agree to a maximum four hours and 21 minutes on any one shift.

This is a climbdown from management.

But driver Dave Manningham told *Socialist Worker*, "Many workers were very angry at the meeting last Sunday.

"They felt they'd been left totally unclear about all the details of the deal."

The TGWU is to ballot all the drivers this week over the proposed deal.

## Socialist Alliance

THERE WILL be local council elections in many parts of England outside London on Thursday 1 May. A number of Socialist Alliances, including Birmingham, Bristol and Colchester, have already selected some candidates.

Many more Socialist Alliances will be selecting candidates over the next few weeks.

This will go hand in hand with the intensifying campaign over the democratisation of the political funds in many key trade unions.

Democratisation motions have already been passed at branch or regional level in the FBU, Amicus, TSSA and the GMB to be debated at the national conferences.

It will be a key debate at the CWU, RMT and Unison conferences.

**ROB HOVEMAN, national secretary Socialist Alliance**

□**TWO IMPORTANT by-elections were taking place on Thursday of this week.**

The first is in the Mixenden ward in Halifax where the Nazi BNP is standing a candidate.

Anti-Nazi activists have mounted a "Don't Vote Nazi" campaign and were out leafleting and arguing with people right up until polling day.

The second by-election is in the Tottenham Hale ward of Haringey in north London.

Local firefighter Steve Cracknell is standing for the Socialist Alliance.

*Socialist Worker* will run a full report on both election results in next week's issue.

## Globalise Resistance

GLOBALISE Resistance hosted an important meeting last Sunday. It was attended by activists and representatives from NGOs, trade unions, campaigns and local Globalise Resistance groups.

The outcome was a calendar of actions around issues and events for the year ahead.

**DESPINA MAVROU**

## GLOBALISE THIS

Speaking tour with Soheir Morsy from Egypt, Antonio Camperi, social forum activist from Italy, and Daniel Correa, Brazilian landless labourers' union and others.

□**Monday 10 February Liverpool University and Manchester**  
□**Tuesday 11 February York University and Sheffield**  
□**Wednesday 12 February Goldsmiths' College and London School of Economics**  
□**Thursday 13 February Swansea and Bristol**  
□**Friday 14 February London**  
For more information go to [www.resist.org.uk](http://www.resist.org.uk)  
Phone 020 7053 2071

## Anti-deportation

FRIENDS AND campaigners were angered by the news that SWP member Tham Sarki was detained on Friday 17 January and is facing deportation.

Tham is an asylum seeker from Nepal and is currently studying at Lewisham College in south London.

He will be immediately imprisoned if he is deported and could face torture and even execution.



INDRO SEN supported by pupils on the picket line last Thursday

## Kingsland School

NATIONAL UNION of Teachers (NUT) members at Kingsland School in Hackney, east London, struck on Thursday of last week in support of their sacked union rep, Indro Sen.

The strike went ahead despite appalling levels of intimidation by management.

Many staff at the school are overseas teachers who were made to feel they would be sacked or have work visas revoked for supporting the strike.

The picket line drew support from teachers and other workers in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Camden.

"We've shown we won't just sit by while Indro Sen is sacked", said one Kingsland teacher.

"Four other schools in Hackney are voting on whether to ballot to join the strike action."

Indro Sen addressed the rally and told *Socialist Worker*, "This is about defending the school and defending union rights as well as about me.

"The plan of the Learning Trust, which runs education in Hackney, is to move against comprehensive principles.

"I have fought for comprehensive education all my life,

## Health service

THE executive of the health sector of public sector union Unison delivered a surprising blow to the government's attempt to drive through a rotten three-year pay deal for NHS staff.

The government wants all health workers to accept a three year 10 percent pay deal, worth just 3.2 percent a year.

It has tied this insulting pay deal to its new pay package for health workers, "Agenda for Change".

In a surprising vote, the executive agreed to argue to submit a pay claim for all workers who are not covered by the pay review bodies, including many low paid workers.

The claim is for £2,000 or 10 percent this year, whichever

is greater, and for a reduction in the working week to 35 hours.

The vote was 19 votes to 17, with many executive members usually loyal to the government voting to submit the pay claim.

Yunus Bakhsh, a member of the United Left who is on the national executive, explains:

"It's clear that people usually loyal to New Labour are furious with health secretary Alan Milburn for trying to tie this rotten 10 percent deal to Agenda for Change.

"It is going to be months before the balloting process on Agenda for Change goes through.

"Low paid health workers need a pay rise now."

## Train drivers

AROUND 2,500 train drivers working for the freight company English Welsh & Scottish Railway (EWS) are to strike over pay and hours.

They include workers who have recently blocked ammunition trains in Scotland.

The workers are members of Aslef and voted overwhelmingly for action in a ballot.

Strikes have been set for four Saturdays—1,8,15,22 February.

John Geoghegan, the Aslef chair for union reps in EWS, told *Socialist Worker*, "The company has been stalling on talks and does not seem serious about addressing our grievances.

"We want to move now to a 35-hour week—which has been promised but never implemented.

"At present some drivers are on 12-hour shifts, which we do not believe is good for the workers involved or for safety.

"We also want a decent pay deal. EWS drivers are on the lowest basic pay and have the worst pensions of any drivers in Britain."

RMT members on EWS were also set to announce the result of a strike ballot this week.

including during the 20 years I have been at Kingsland.

"I was sacked because I am a thorn in their side."

NUT rep Sheila McGregor told the rally, "We have got the support of the union and today shows the support we have got from members in other schools."

Bernard Regan, NUT executive member for inner London, said the union could not retreat from defending reps.

■**Demonstrate in support of Indro Sen—assemble 12 noon, Saturday 1 February, Kingsland School, Shacklewell Lane, London.**

## Homerton Hospital

DOMESTIC, portering and catering staff at Homerton University Hospital in east London have voted overwhelmingly for strikes against their low pay and rotten conditions.

The 200 staff are employed by private contractor ISS Mediclean.

Mass meetings saw nearly two thirds of the workforce come together and vote by over 90 percent for action.

A formal strike ballot will now begin.

At present staff employed by ISS Mediclean at Homerton get as little as £4.45 an hour, have no London

## London weighting

THE NATIONAL Union of Teachers has called a rally for 5 February as the latest stage in the campaign for higher allowances for working in London.

The campaign saw two strikes last year and further action is due to be announced at the rally. It is likely to be selective strikes.

Union activists welcome the action, but want to go further.

They are arguing for a ballot to refuse to cover for absences of longer than one day to unify the action.

weighting, no overtime rate, no company sick pay and no pension.

ISS Mediclean, a multinational with profits of £137 million in 2001, has consistently refused to hold proper talks with the union over pay and conditions.

Now it is going to pay the price.

In the run-up to the meetings dozens of workers joined the union.

We are now determined to win the ballot and start action.

**DIANA SWINGLER, Unison branch chair, Homerton University Hospital**



### Saturday 25 January

●**Socialist Alliance women's day school, 11am-5pm, Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. Phone 020 7536 9696 or e-mail margaret@homemanning.freeseve.co.uk**

### Sunday 26 January

●**Screening of Argentinian film Hour of the Furnaces, 1.30pm, The Other Cinema, 12 Rupert Street, London. Tickets £5—phone 020 7734 1506 or go to [www.picturehouses.co.uk](http://www.picturehouses.co.uk)**

### Monday 27 January

●**Say no to the Daily Mail's war on refugees—protest outside Daily Mail offices on Holocaust Memorial Day. Called by Barbed Wire Britain, Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, Jewish Socialist Group and others. 5.30pm, Daily Mail Offices, 2 Derry Street, London (High Street Kensington  ).**

### Tuesday 28 January

●**Support anti-war protester**

Leo Zeilig, 9.30am, Bow Street Magistrates' Court, London (Bow Road  ).

### Saturday 8 February

●**Anti Nazi League national conference, Manchester. Phone 020 7924 0333 for details.**

### Saturday 15 February

●**National demonstration against the war, 12 noon, Embankment  , London. Called by Stop the War Coalition. For more info phone 020 7053 2135 or go to [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk)**  
●**Demonstration against the war, Glasgow. Assemble 11am, George Square.**

### 28 February-2 March

●**Revolution 2003—a teach-in to build resistance to war and capitalism hosted by Socialist Worker Student Society and Spark. Phone 020 7515 2646 or go to [www.swp.org.uk/swss](http://www.swp.org.uk/swss) for details.**

### Saturday 1 March

●**Globalise Resistance and trade unions conference. For more info go to [www.resist.org.uk](http://www.resist.org.uk) or phone 020 7053 2071.**

### 4-11 July

●**Marxism 2003. A week of debates, forums and meetings organised by the Socialist Workers Party.**



# 'WE CAN ALL DO SOMETHING AGAINST THE WAR'

# Movement reaches every part of Britain

**OPPOSITION TO war is growing in every part of Britain.**

From local areas in big towns to small towns and even villages people are getting organised to build for a monster-sized demonstration in London on 15 February.

Organisers were taken aback by the size and strength of feeling on a series of demonstrations and protests which were held last weekend in solidarity with the anti-war demos in the US.

In Bradford around 3,000 people demonstrated—three times more than organisers expected.

A group of women marching with a "Baildon Peace Group" banner told *Socialist Worker* that they had donated their banner to the Bradford Peace Museum after campaigning against cruise missiles in the 1980s. They had to ask for it back!

Heather, Claire and Amy, 14 year old school students from Halifax, said many of their friends were against war. "Our history teacher is really cool. He says if war

by JUDY COX

breaks out he will sit in the road, and we will join him," they said.

"In Liverpool pensioners, rail workers, teachers, firefighters, health workers and students were out in force to show their opposition to this bloody war," reports Daniel Swaine.

Around 2,000 people marched on the demo called by Liverpool Trades Council, Friends of Palestine and the Stop the War Coalition.

"The march was extremely multiracial, and was attended by a huge range of people from the city," says Daniel.

"There were union banners from the FBU, NUT and Aslef, and others including Unison and the GPMU."

"It was the biggest march we have had in years."

So says Theresa about the 1,500-strong stop the war march in Cardiff last Saturday.

"It was mixed, noisy, happy and lots of people joined in as we marched along," says Theresa.

## Picture

"The headline in the *Wales on Sunday* newspaper the next day was 'Wales Says No To War, Tony', with a massive picture of the demo."

Around 250 anti-war activists blocked the road at the US military base at Northwood, west London, last Sunday.

A group of protesters brought a five-foot wide pair of purple Y-fronts decorated with the slogan "War is pants".

But it's not just the big demos.

As the examples on this page show, everyone can do something to make 15 February an incredible show of protest against the war.



OVER 3,000 people came out to protest in Bradford last Saturday

## 'Biggest meeting since the poll tax'

**CITY CENTRE** rallies against the war continue to attract hundreds of people.

Now campaigners are using them as a springboard to launch the movement in their workplaces, schools and colleges, and local areas.

A stop the war meeting at Plymouth Guildhall, with George Galloway MP speaking, attracted some 600 people.

Sandra from the Plymouth Stop the War Coalition said, "The inspirational meeting has led to the formation of neighbourhood anti-war groups in Plymouth, plus groups in Liskeard, Saltash, Newton Abbot, Teignmouth and Dawlish.

"Last September we sent 200 people to the demo—we hope to more than double that in February."

On Monday of last week 250 people packed into a hall in Haringey to hear George Galloway, Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui from the Muslim Parliament, Gulf War veteran Tony Flint, and Lindsey

German for the Stop the War Coalition.

"The rally was the largest anti-war meeting Haringey has seen," the chair of the local Stop the War Coalition, Sean Wallis, reported.

"At the end of the meeting people planned local activities to get the maximum number from every community out on the streets on 15 February.

"As a result of the meeting we now have groups in Wood Green, Haringey, Green Lanes, Crouch End,

Stroud Green, Muswell Hill and Tottenham."

In Scunthorpe nearly 80 people attended the debate about Iraq on Friday of last week.

Local Labour MP Elliot Morley attempted to defend the government position, but the vast majority agreed with the Stop the War Coalition that the war was about US power and oil.

Campaigners have now organised public meetings in the small neighbouring towns of Goole and Snaith.

In Bristol successful

central rallies have been followed up with meetings in local areas.

Louise Clarke helped to organise a meeting in the Easton area of Bristol that attracted 18 people.

"It was a fantastic meeting," Louise told *Socialist Worker*.

"We drew up a rota for the Saturday stall, organised three teams of flyposting, and a member of the TGWU union said he would contact workers at the local bus garage.

"Everyone wanted to do more than go on the national demo—they wanted to help make sure the demo is massive."

A stop the war meeting in Blackpool was the biggest political meeting in the town since the campaign against the poll tax.

Martin from Derby reports, "An anti-war meeting in the Pakistani Community Centre in Derby attracted 250 people on Thursday of last week.

"A whole coach for the 15 February demo was filled just in that one evening."



AROUND 100 people joined a peace vigil in Cambridge last week

## From Buxton to Bridgwater—we're everywhere

THE MOVEMENT is reaching to small towns and even villages.

In the picturesque town of Buxton, Derbyshire, an anti-war group was set up by one woman who was fed up because she missed last September's demonstration in London.

She started petitioning and held a vigil of 60 people in the town. The group is now putting on a coach for the national demo.

Two coaches from Leamington Spa are booked for the national demonstration and two have also been organised by the Hereford Stop the War Coalition.

Joss from Hereford told *Socialist Worker*, "Graffiti has appeared

around the town saying 'No war' and 'Demonstrate against war'."

A coach has been organised for 15 February from the rural town of Knighton on the Welsh Borders, a town more famous for the Offa's Dyke visitor centre than political activism.

Campaigners in the Somerset town of Bridgwater take a "wheel of peace" to the town centre every Saturday. It was launched in response to one they saw at the European Social Forum in Florence.

Brian Smedley told *Socialist Worker*, "We recently held a 'Food not bombs' gig. It was packed out and as a result we got an extra 30

young people to turn up to the next peace group meeting two days later."

"The first coach for 15 February is already full."

Anti-war campaigners in Barnsley have helped to set up a group in the town of Penniston, where ten people came to the first organising meeting.

The Stop the War Coalition in Swansea told *Socialist Worker*, "We are expecting to run more coaches than we did for 28 September.

"We also are working with nearby towns and believe there is a good chance of transport leaving from Tenby, Carmarthen, Llanelli, Pontardawe, Ammanford and Neath."

Andy from the Swindon Stop the War Coalition says, "So far we have two coaches booked. We are confident of at least four, including one from Chippenham."

"On Wednesday of last week we showed a film about the effect of sanctions on Iraq, and 37 came.

"On 30 January we have a meeting with George Galloway MP. We have got the trades council to mail all trade union branches, and Swindon Church of England are sending a mailing for all church people.

"Marlborough Peace Group have a vigil every week and are putting on their own coach—Marlborough is tiny!"

## Factories offices colleges

THOUSANDS OF trade unionists are mobilising against the war and lots of workplace groups are being established.

In central London these include a group at the *Guardian* newspaper, tube workers, health workers, IT workers, media workers and lecturers.

Richard is a council worker in Norton Radstock in the West Country. He told *Socialist Worker*, "Last time we had to get a coach from Bath. This time we hope to have a coach from Midsomer Norton.

"Lots of people in my workplace are now wearing stop the war badges. There is a new spirit of determination."

Campaigners are finding it easy to get a hearing inside big workplaces.

Anti-war campaigners in Liverpool have been invited to address shop stewards at the ACDelco engineering factory.

They have also spoken to meetings of 50 stewards at Ford Halewood and over 40 at Vauxhall.

An Architects Against the War group has been set up.

Signatures to their launch statement include architectural historian and designer Charles Jencks, president of the Royal Institute of British Architects Paul Hyett, and Lord Richard Rogers.

There is also huge potential to build the anti-war movement in schools and colleges.

Just two days into the new term over 100 students attended an anti-war meeting at the London School of Economics on Monday last week.

Paul from Leeds Metropolitan University reports, "Professor Haleh Afshar made a rousing speech to 50 students and staff last Wednesday, a good number as it was a week before exams."

A representative from the Stop the War Coalition in Preston has been invited to address all classes at the Cardinal Newman Catholic sixth form college in Preston.

At Coburn High School in Leeds the *Not in My Name* video was shown to staff and an anti-war campaigner has been invited to address a school assembly.

## Scottish success

SOME 300 campaigners turned out for a Scottish Coalition for Justice not War activists' conference last Saturday.

They came from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Fife, Inverness and the Highlands and Islands to discuss building the biggest possible anti-war protest at the Labour Party conference due to be held in Glasgow on 15 February.

In Stirling last Thursday 100 or so anti-war protesters made a splash when Tony Blair visited the town, even though they only had an hour's notice of the visit.

## On a street near you

EVERYONE can organise something where they live to campaign against the war.

Sue Jones organised a local meeting based on just a couple of streets in Dalston, east London.

She explained, "It was ever so easy. I made a leaflet, leafleted my own street and one other, and left some leaflets in the local bookshop and cinema."

"Twelve people turned up. Everyone was really up for doing things. We went out flyposting straight afterwards, and are doing a stall every Saturday until the demo."

"One woman said she knew performers who can come down and do street theatre."

Angela from Sheffield told *Socialist Worker*, "We recently set up a Sharrow Against the War group."

"We held a meeting this week to organise the meeting on 21 January, and 11 people came along including five new people! We will be sending at least one coach from Sharrow on 15 February."

"Already five parents from Lowfield School, which the Labour council are trying to close, have booked seats on the coach, and some of the older children want to come too."



# Why we welcome refugees

## 1 Britain is not overcrowded

THERE ARE nearly 60 million people in Britain and the birth rate is falling.

The number of refugees expected to apply to come here this year is about 0.17 percent of the population.

Britain ranks seventh among the 15 countries of the European Union in terms of asylum applications.

There are 753,188 empty homes in Britain, according to the government's Empty Homes Agency.

The refugee-bashers say nothing about ending that housing scandal.

Instead the *Sun* attacks the government for not selling off more council houses.

## 2 Immigrants contribute to society in Britain

MOST ASYLUM seekers and immigrants are in their twenties and thirties.

They are less likely to need medical care than the very young or elderly.

Immigrant workers contribute £2.5 billion a year to the economy.

The refugee-bashers bang on about asylum seekers claiming benefits.

Asylum seekers are NOT ALLOWED to work until they get refugee status.

Most of them have much-needed skills.

This is because they often come from the educated layers in their home countries who are more likely to be able to get out.

But they are not allowed to contribute to society in Britain.

Instead they are put on just 70 percent of the level of income support, which is already below the poverty line.

A single adult gets just £37.77 a week.

The government has just withdrawn all benefits from asylum seekers who do not fill in a complicated application form the moment they enter the country.

## 3 New Labour has not been 'soft on asylum' it has caved in to the refugee-bashers

HOME SECRETARY David Blunkett is concentrating asylum seekers in "centres" in order to appease the anti-refugee brigade.

THE MOST right wing and privileged forces in society are trying to create hysteria over people fleeing persecution to come to this country.

They are even trying to turn the death of a policeman in Manchester into a campaign against asylum seekers.

The logic is barking. The fact that the three suspects arrested at the Manchester house had claimed asylum says nothing about the overwhelming majority of asylum seekers.

There are a tiny number of Irish people in Britain who support the Republican splinter

groups that want to continue armed struggle in Northern Ireland.

Does that mean we should lock up or kick out the hundreds of thousands of Irish people who live here? Of course not.

Dr Harold Shipman murdered possibly hundreds of his patients. Should we routinely round up GPs?

Does the fact that serial killer Fred West was a builder mean we should fear for our lives when we get someone in to do repairs?

Yet papers like the *Sun*, *Mail* and *Express* are calling for action against ALL asylum

seekers purely because they are asylum seekers.

Many of those papers are also pushing for war and policies abroad that will create more refugees.

The biggest single group of asylum seekers coming to Britain are from Iraq.

The next biggest is from Zimbabwe. The Tories and papers such as the *Sun*, *Mail* and *Express* constantly tell us what tyrants Saddam Hussein and Robert Mugabe are.

But when people try to flee those tyrants, the same politicians and papers say we should send them back.

These are not the only inconvenient facts the refugee-bashers ignore. *Socialist Worker* answers the lies, gives you the facts and says refugees are welcome here.



## 4 This witch-hunt will boost racism

THE RIGHT wing papers claim that by raising "genuine concerns" they are undercutting the racists.

Home secretary David Blunkett says that too. But his nasty anti-refugee measures have only encouraged the likes of the *Daily Mail* to attack him for not going far enough.

Further to the right still stand the Nazi British National Party.

The bile in the press is music to their ears. BNP fuhrer, Cambridge-educated toff Griffin, says the "asylum issue legitimises us". He also says he wants "an all white Britain".

The hysteria against asylum seekers will mean more racist murders like that of black teenager Stephen Lawrence.

Liberal scaremongering? Well, decrepit Tory Norman Tebbit revelled last weekend when he wrote in a refugee-bashing article that Enoch Powell's "prophesies will come to pass".

Powell incited race riots in 1968 by claiming immigration into Britain would lead to "rivers of blood".

He was not ranting about asylum seekers only, but calling for the deportation of ALL black people.

Racist thugs don't distinguish between asylum seekers and black people who were born here.

Everyone who genuinely opposes racism should combat the lies about asylum seekers.

**Who's behind the witch-hunt?**

JUST LOOK at the people who are spewing out lies about asylum and immigration.

●The *Sun*—owned by billionaire Rupert Murdoch. He has homes in five countries and moves money round the world so he pays less than a penny per pound in tax.

●The *Daily Mail*—owned by the toff Rothermere family. The paper's "ultimate holding company" is registered in Bermuda—the Caribbean island tax haven.

Its editor, Paul Dacre, was paid £830,000 last year. What does he know about the concerns of ordinary people?

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